

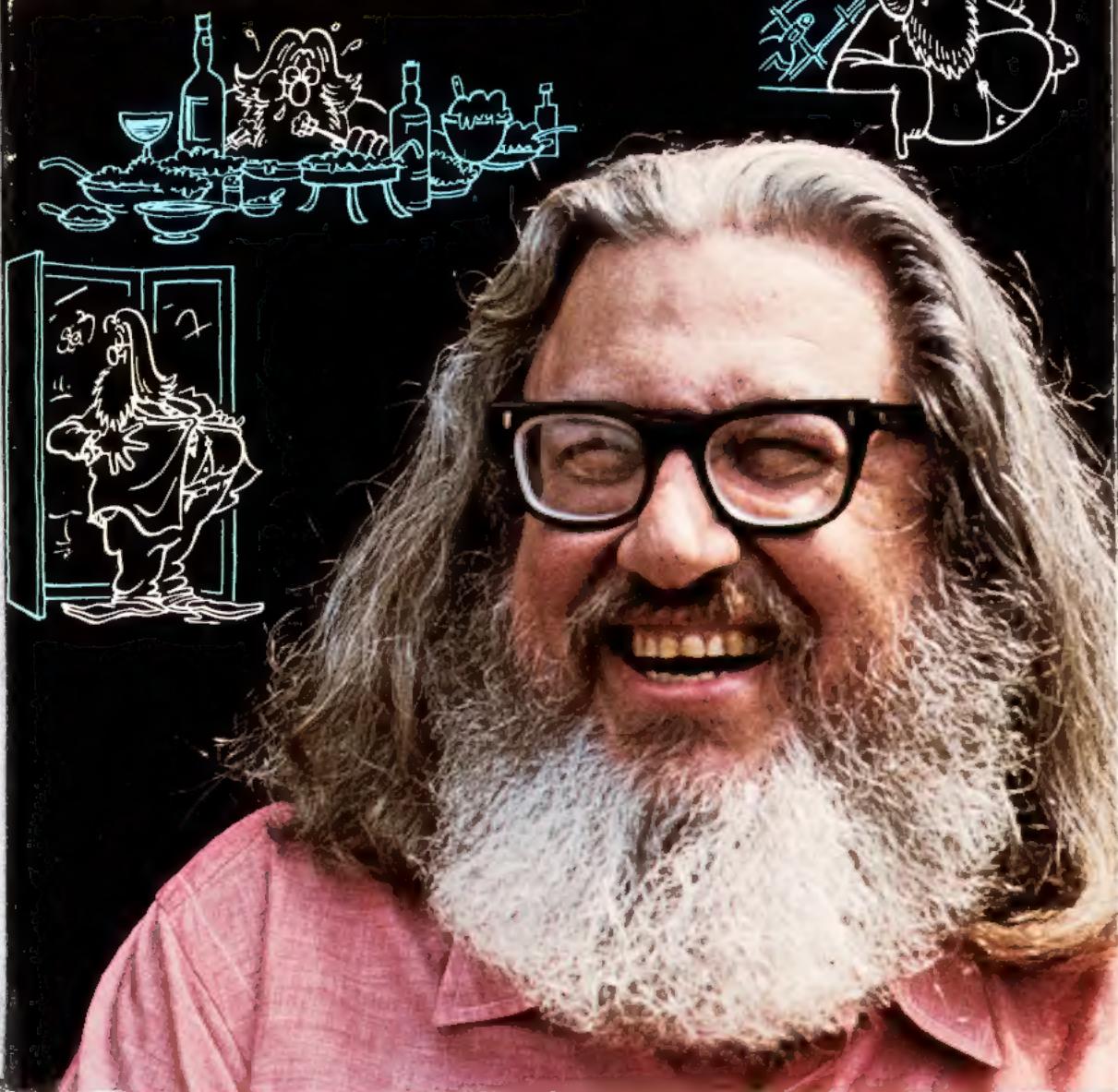
MAD

THE

WORLD OF

William M. Gaines

BY FRANK JACOBS

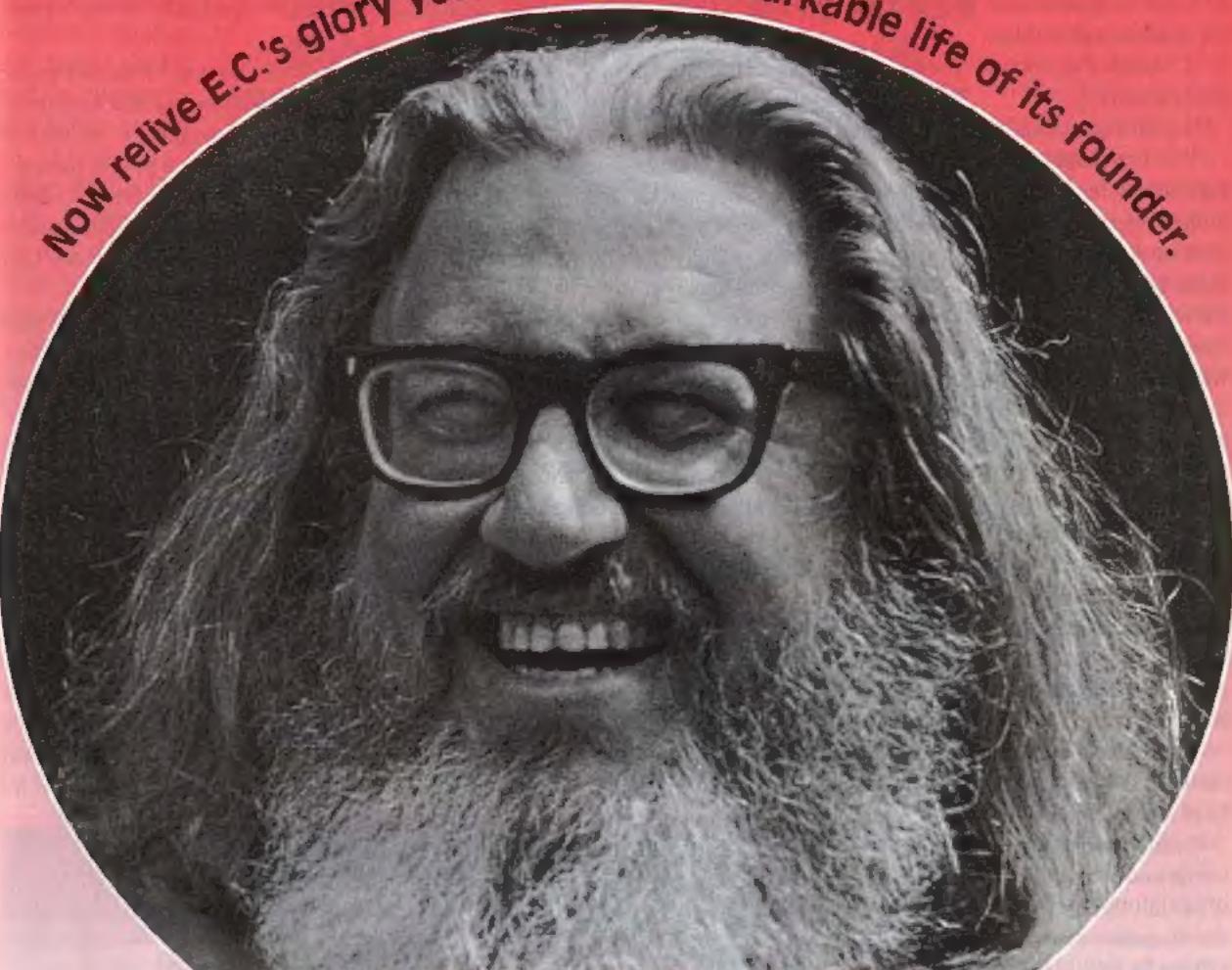


Many of our readers consider Frank Jacobs' *The Mad World of William M. Gaines* to be the definitive narrative of Bill Gaines' life and his E.C. empire. Scarce and long out of print, the book chronicles the Gaines era through 1972.

Now starting with MAD XL#1, the book, with minor deletions, is being reprinted for the first time. Five more installments will be featured in future issues.

You've read the magazine.
Now relive E.C.'s glory years and the remarkable life of its founder.

PHOTO BY JOHN PULTMAN



THE **MAD** WORLD OF **WILLIAM M. GAINES**

BY FRANK JACOBS



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF
LEONARD BRIERLEY

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A PREFACE TO GAINES

One day, so the story goes, a teenage reader wandered into the offices of MAD Magazine and buttonholed the first person he saw.

"I want to talk to the publisher," the boy said.

"I am the publisher," said the person.

The boy blinked. The person he was talking to was a shaggy, rumpled hulk, dressed in a faded, pink sport shirt and baggy, unpressed trousers. Most of the bespectacled face was buried behind a hopelessly untrimmed beard. The rest of the head was enshrouded in a puzzle of hanging hair, styled only by the force of gravity.

"You've got to be kidding," the boy said.

No, it was true. The hulk was William Maxwell Gaines, publisher of MAD, millionaire, gourmet, wine expert, practical joker, King Kong fanatic, zeppelin enthusiast, hater of exercise, and one of the least probable men in the world.

"We all have our many sides," says his sister, Elaine, "but Bill seems to have so many more of them."

Gaines runs MAD on his own terms and would like to run the rest of his life the same way. Shortly after the magazine moved into its present offices at 485 MADison Avenue, he toddled down for a chat with the manager of the building's restaurant, Morgen's East.

"I'm going to be in this building for at least ten years and I'm going to eat in this restaurant, sometimes with guests, at least four times a week, forty to fifty weeks a year,"

Gaines said. "The only thing I wish is not to wear a tie. If you insist on my wearing a tie, you will lose a lot of business."

"I'm sorry," the manager said, "but we can't let anyone eat here without a tie."

"Okay," Gaines said, and left, crossing the place off his list. Several years later, the restaurant lifted its ban and allowed guests to dine tieless. If Morgen's East thought Gaines would now become a patron, Morgen's East was mistaken. "There is no way I will ever set foot in the place," he says.

This is, in some ways, a pity, because Gaines likes comfort and convenience in his life, and the restaurant offers both. But, as he says, "There are some things you can't forgive."

If Gaines had his way, the outdoors would be air-conditioned in summer and heated in winter, and all stairs would be replaced by escalators. For the present, however, he must make do with the imperfect world he has been deposited in.

One might he and I were strolling to a restaurant.

"Frank, please," he objected.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"You mustn't walk so fast. We are going one degree uphill."

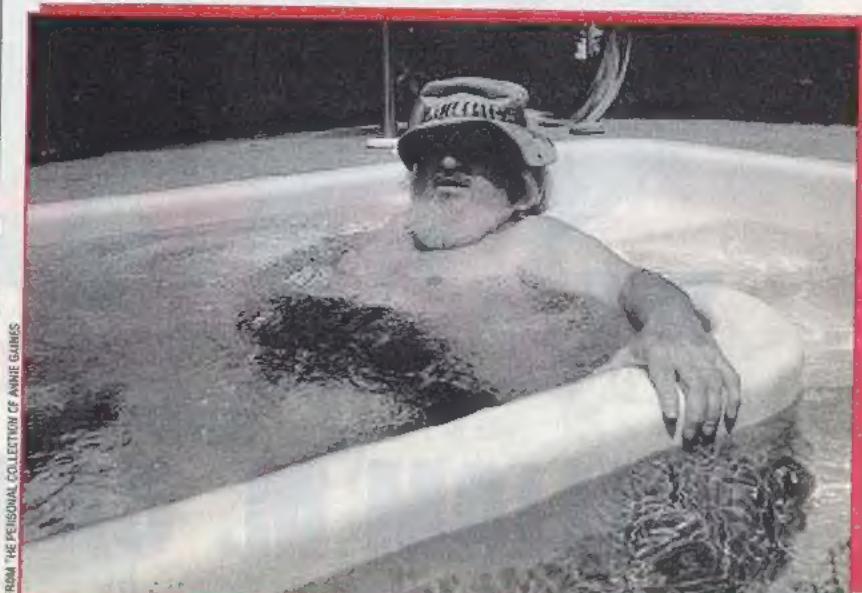
Gaines's mind is a nest of compartments, each programmed to make day-to-day living easier. He

has special routes for getting about New York and has been known to walk three blocks out of his way in order to avoid a short stretch of uphill climbing. Of course, these are one-way routes. When he leaves the MAD office to lunch at a place, say, five blocks downhill, he will return in a taxi.

One night he and I watched home movies taken during his boyhood. During a party sequence, he directed my attention to a young man jitterbugging. "Look at him," Gaines said. "I'll have you know that he now wears a pacemaker in his heart. Can there be any doubt why?"

Gaines has danced twice—the first time when he took a lesson, the last time at a high school prom when he tried out the step he learned at the lesson. As a boy, he played softball once. He recalls getting one hit, which turned into a home run after the other team made four successive throwing errors. He might have played a second time, but someone told him he threw "like a girl," which ended any dreams of sandlot glory.

Gaines has skied once. He gave it up after twenty minutes because of two handicaps: he couldn't bend over to fasten his skis, and when he



Bill Gaines enjoyed extreme water sports — as long as they involved no physical movement whatsoever.



finally got them on, he would soon fall and lie in the snow, like a beetle on its back, unable to right himself.

Gaines has aquaplaned once. Again there were physical problems. He required one hand to hold on to his horn-rimmed glasses (without them he can't see), and he required the other hand to keep his

swim trunks from falling, which they did whenever the boat picked up speed. This left no remaining hand with which to hold on to the ropes.

But why dwell on one man's inadequacies? There are a number of things that Gaines does well — traveling, eating, wine-tasting, laughing, and, in between all these, publishing MAD.

"My staff and contributors create the magazine," he has said. "What I create is the atmosphere."

During MAD's early years, Gaines employed a stockroom boy named Anthony, a well-behaved, industrious chap, who suffered from only one character flaw — extreme gullibility. One day Gaines revealed that he had a twin brother named Rex.

"Watch out for him, Anthony," Gaines warned. "Rex looks exactly like me except that he has a scar on his cheek and talks loud and mean and nasty. He doesn't have any money, so he steals from other people. If you see him, he'll be wearing my clothes because he stole them from me."

A few days later, Gaines walked out of the office, applied a rubber cement scar to his face, and walked in as Rex. Anthony was appalled to see Rex stride through the office, shouting terrible oaths, bullying the employees, even rifling the petty cash box in Gaines's office. Anthony saw and Anthony believed.

Rex's visits continued. He would demand to see his twin brother,

refusing to believe Anthony's explanation that William Gaines was out. Sometimes Rex had a scar on his right cheek, sometimes on his left — Gaines could never remember which he'd used the time before —

Rex proceeded to describe the plot, which, of course, came from Anthony's script.

"That's my play!" Anthony protested.

"Yeah," growled Rex, "but can you prove it? I stole it from my brother when he wasn't here, and now it's mine and you can't do anything about it."

Anthony became so hysterical that someone in the office — Gaines never found out who — broke down and revealed the hoax for what it was. Gaines was sorry the gag was blown because he had been planning to end it himself in more appropriate fashion.

"We were going to kill Rex off, stage a funeral, and put up his tombstone in a cemetery, carved for real — 'Rex Gaines, Born 1922 — Died

1959.' It would have been the perfect ending."

More than a decade has passed, and MAD continues to be Gaines's private circus. Financially, the magazine is big business, bringing in a yearly profit in millions, but, unlike other publishing operations, there is a refreshing dearth of pomp and self-importance. This spirit was reflected on the cover of

**"My staff and contributors create the magazine," Gaines has said.
"What I create is the atmosphere."**

but Anthony remained a believer.

Years passed, and Gaines feared that Anthony was catching on. One morning the phone rang in Gaines's office. "Anthony, it's for you," Gaines shouted. Anthony picked up the phone and, while Gaines looked on, heard Rex's voice, tape recorded, on the other end: "Anthony, don't say a G***damn word — just listen!" The voice screamed on for thirty seconds, then hung up.

Gaines's mother visited the office and was cornered by Anthony.

"Mrs. Gaines, you wouldn't lie to me. Do you really have another son named Rex?"

"I'd rather not talk about it," she said.

Anthony was an aspiring playwright. After he left MAD, he wrote a play called *The Canary Cage* and sent it to Gaines to read. A few weeks later, Anthony phoned to get Gaines's reaction. Rex answered.

"Anthony, I just wantcha to know I'm producing a musical with Rodgers and Hammerstein called *The Gilded Canary Cage*."



MAD's centennial issue:

**MAD PROUDLY PRESENTS
ITS 100th ISSUE (Big deal!)**

The staff works hard to sustain MAD's worthless image. The magazine puts itself down as a cheap rag, containing trash,



**OUR
PRICE
30¢
CHEAP**

garbage and other unworthy components. Gaines frets each time inflation forces the magazine to raise its newsstand price. For years MAD

flaunted its price as "25¢—Cheap." But rising costs forced up the price to "30¢—Highway Robbery." In 1971, MAD raised its price another nickel. For the next several issues, Gaines tried to placate his readers with these successive front-cover comments: "40¢—Ouch!" "40¢—Outrageous!" "40¢—No Laughing Matter" "40¢—Relatively cheap!" "40¢—Cheap (Considering!)" "40¢—Cheap?" and, finally, "40¢—Cheap."

This kind of self-deprecation is unusual for a magazine, but, then, Gaines is not your usual kind of executive. Other publishers may insist their employees punch a time clock. Not Gaines, who lets his people come and go as they please. Other company heads may demand quiet and decorum. Not Gaines, who summons his staff with an interoffice shout and who once gleefully filled the office water cooler with five gallons of white wine and roared with laughter as the day rolled on and he and several of his staff got gloriously swacked.

Gaines's laugh is large and rolling and fills a room, but, then, so does he. "There is no more musical sound

in the world than Bill Gaines laughing" says art director John Putnam. "Gaines has an infectious laugh, and if you stand too close to him you can catch a fat flu," says writer Larry Siegel. Even Gaines's ex-wife, Nancy, agrees that he is one of the greatest audiences in the world, although, reflecting on their stormy marriage, "I can't remember ever having done anything that amused him."

Gaines is not the marrying kind, although he has tried it twice. The closest thing in his life to a perfect union occurred when he began publishing MAD. Gaines and MAD, like a boy and his frog, are inseparable.

In the pages to come, we will explore the life and times of the creature called William M. Gaines. We will examine his feeding and drinking habits and watch him in moments of pleasure and in times of stress. We will note his behavior in

his native habitat and his adaptability to foreign climes. We will inquire into his methods of mating and see how they have failed. We will observe the changes in his shape and attempt to explain rationally why such changes are inevitable. We will see how he responds to the stimuli of his friends and how he defends himself against his enemies.

Join me, then, as we enter the MAD World of William M. Gaines.

CHAPTER 2

ONE MAN'S FAMILY

Asistant art director Leonard (The Beard) Brenner rose from his MAD drawing board and strode the thirty feet into the private office of William M. Gaines. Brenner faced his employer and glowered. Gaines looked up, suspicious.

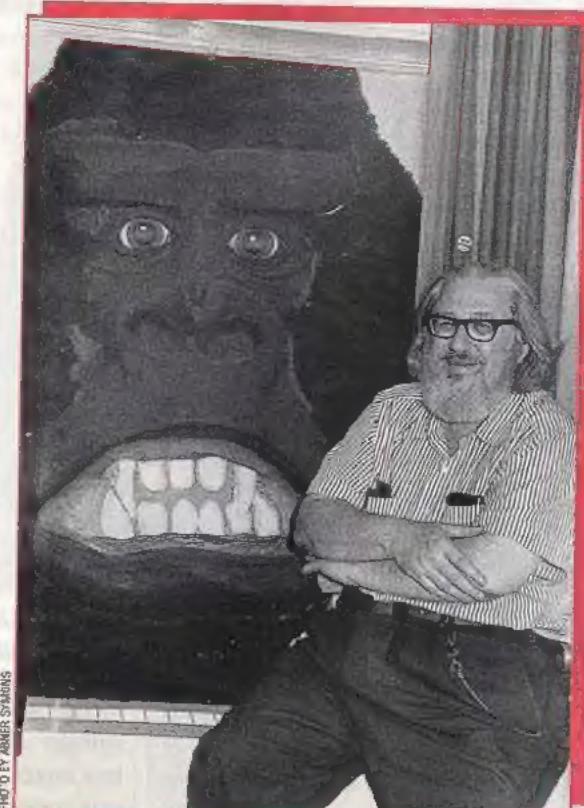
"What do you want?"

"We're going to Little Charlie's for spaghetti and clam sauce, you fat bastard," commanded Brenner, who had no intention of going anywhere. "When will you be ready?"

"Whenever you are," said Gaines, picking up the gauntlet. "Twelve-thirty will be fine."

"Be ready at twelve-thirty or else," ordered Brenner, unable now to back out.

A luncheon group formed. Gaines, Brenner, associate editor Nick Meglin, and Bob Clarke, who was in the office dropping off an art job, taxied the eighty blocks to Little Charlie's, an Italian restaurant in lower Manhattan. They ate a considerable amount, washing down the spaghetti with several bottles of Little Charlie's sturdy red wine. Stuffed and swacked, they jagged to the Bowery to hail a cab to take them back uptown. At the traffic light stood a bum, looking to wipe the windshields of cars that stopped and thereby pick up some tips.



Courtesy of Sergio Aragones and the MAD staff, King Kong peered into Bill's office window at 485 MADISON Avenue for years.



A car stopped. Before the bum could react, Meglin, who was dressed in a suit and tie, raced to the car, flashed a silk handkerchief, and proceeded to wipe the windshield.

"I accept major credit cards," he announced proudly.

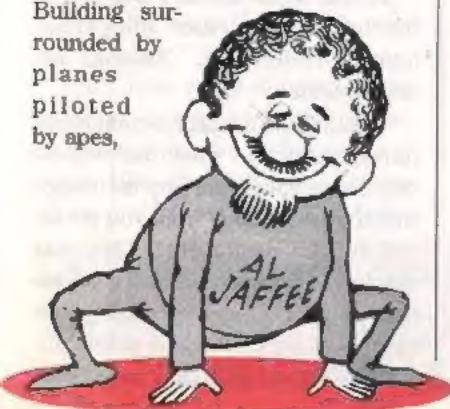
The driver stared in astonishment.

The bum looked perplexed. Gaines, leaning against a building for support, almost collapsed from laughing. Meglin knew he would, which is why he pulled the gag in the first place.



"Gaines is a very responsive person, and he inspires you to bigger and better gags. You wind up doing most anything to hear him laugh."

True. Gaines, the total audience, taps a wellspring of lunacy in the people who work for him. Knowing Gaines's love of the movie *King Kong*, Meglin sketched MAD's idiot coverboy, Alfred E. Neuman, on top of the Empire State Building surrounded by planes piloted by apes.



scratching their heads in puzzlement. Gaines roared with pleasure and declared it was too good a gag to waste. Thus, what began as a pri-

"There is no more musical sound in the world than Bill Gaines laughing."

vate joke wound up as the cover of MAD No. 94.

The first thing you see when you enter Gaines's office is the gigantic presence of King Kong peering in a window. The papier-mâché, fur-cov-



Overeating at Little Charlie's: Al Jaffee, Dave Berg and an employee from a local burger joint invited to join along because the MAD staff found him funny.

ered gorilla was hand-crafted by artist Sergio Aragones and presented to Gaines as a Christmas gift from his staff and contributors.

Hanging from the ceiling are various zeppelins — all gifts from MADmen — and the outlandish MAD Zeppelin, co-created by artist George Woodbridge and art director John Putnam and later included as a bonus cut out in a MAD Special. On a cabinet sits an old peep-show nickelodeon — also a Christmas gift — in which one can view a flip-card film, interposed with photos of the MAD crew, each greeting Gaines with an obscene gesture. Nearby rests another gift, an ancient cash register that once belonged to Meglin's grandfather. Each key bears a peculiar face or phrase.

Push down the key picturing Leonard Brenner and at the top of the machine pops up a metal tab, proclaiming, "Whaddya want, ya fat bastard!" Push down a picture of omnipresent mascot Alfred E. Neuman and up pops "No Sale."

What prompts these gifts? Well, for one thing, they have become a tradition. For another, there's Gaines's great spirit of appreciation. For a third, there's that thing called The MAD Family, with Gaines occupying the role of — there's no other word — Godfather.

The MAD Family could not exist without Gaines, who somehow has linked twenty-odd individuals into a flaky brotherhood. Outsiders marvel at the MAD trips, in which Gaines has taken his people to five continents, and there can be no doubt that the junkets have forged unity. But Gaines truly seems to worry about the well-being of his charges. Like when he sold MAD, then phoned his contributors, one by one, to reassure them that he was staying on as publisher and that nothing would change. Like when John Putnam's mother was dying in Mexico City and Gaines paid the air fare for Putnam and his three children. Or like when artist Al Jaffee got his divorce.

Gaines knew that Jaffee was at a low ebb and dreaded the thought of traveling alone, so



Napkin sketches by Sergio Aragones depict Bill's nightmares after binging on another seafood meal.



he suggested that the two of them turn the divorce into a holiday. Gaines got hold of his travel agent and plotted an itinerary, and what Jaffee thought was going to be a quickie flight to Juarez became a five-day Mexican vacation.

When Nick Meglin began analysis, Gaines was eager to hear the details. "How did it go with your shrink?" he asked Meglin after the first visit.

Meglin put on his straightest face. "Bill, let me put it this way. He wants to talk with you." Meglin had a problem of being late for appointments, as did his analyst. One day the doctor walked in several minutes late and found Meglin lying on the couch, ranting about some problem. "I couldn't wait for you," Meglin said with a turn of his head, then went back to his ranting.

One morning, writer Dick DeBartolo came to MAD to drop off a story. As is his custom, he stopped by Gaines's office.

"Hi Fat," said DeBartolo.

"Hello, love. How are you?" responded Gaines.

"Adorable."

"Anything else?"

"No, that's it. Just adorable."

"Well, you're right. Bye, cookie."



Leaving the office, DeBartolo reran the conversation through his mind. Anywhere else it would make no sense, but it's the only way one can talk to Gaines, he decided. In any case, it was a far cry from a reaction he had several years earlier. DeBartolo was new at MAD and phoned Gaines on some matter of business. Secretary Gloria Orlando answered and told DeBartolo to hold on. The next thing he heard was Gaines's voice shouting in the



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF LEONARD BISSENER
MAD writer Dick DeBartolo and Gaines often shared cryptic conversations.

distance, "Good God, you didn't tell him I was in, did you?"

DeBartolo was incensed. He didn't find out until later that this was the treatment Gaines gives many first-time callers. When DeBartolo was a writer on TV's "To Tell The Truth," he got Gaines on the show as a contestant. After Gaines's identity was revealed, Garry Moore made mention of DeBartolo, who then had been a MAD contributor for ten years. Gaines said, "Dick who?"

Not everyone can live with Gaines's paternalism. Harvey Kurtzman, who was MAD's first editor, felt he was being strangled by it. "Gaines holds his people very tightly and jealously, and he treats them like little children," Kurtzman told *Fact Magazine*.

"This man was daddy," recalls former MAD writer Gary Belkin, who of all the magazine's contributors stands out as Gaines's staunchest critic. Belkin went to Haiti on the first MAD trip and was appalled by Gaines's paternalism. "The kind of camaraderie where you make fun of your boss didn't exist," he says.

Belkin wrote about thirty pieces for the magazine, then left, permanently embittered. Among his resentments:

"I found the magazine completely unresponsive to what the writers did. There was never any assurance that they would buy what you wrote, which was disgraceful. This was comic-book orientation and a comic-book mind. I always resented Gaines owning all rights to my material."

Belkin's biggest beef was with



Gaines's annual bonus and profit-sharing plans. When, in 1963, Belkin received nothing, he complained to Gaines that he had "been taken." Gaines wrote Belkin that MAD's policy for the year was to limit bonuses to contributors having sold at least nine pages of material, and that Belkin had sold three. Belkin also felt that he deserved a profit-sharing payment because his material was being reprinted in MAD annuals. Gaines explained

payments were gifts, not obligations, and that he handed them out as incentives to entice recipients into doing more work the following year in hopes of getting another, perhaps higher, payment.

Belkin remained unmoved. "If Gaines said 'Nice day' to me, I'd check it out first." Gaines has continued to measure the value of his freelancers by their output. For the last ten years, writers and artists must have sold a minimum number of pages to qualify for a MAD trip. Gaines has adhered to his formulas strictly, and in 1966 the page requirement eliminated veteran writer Arnie Kogen.

The same year Gaines's mother died. Someone asked Kogen if he were going to the funeral.

"I can't," he said. "I don't have enough pages."

Then there was Kelly Freas, who for years drew most of MAD's covers. Freas wanted a higher rate and didn't like the increase Gaines offered, so he quit. Actually, Freas

was trying to free himself from MAD in order to do more portrait painting.

"Alfred E. Neuman was making me stale," he says today. "I found it difficult to shift my artistic gears from the sublime to the ridiculous

and back again. It didn't have anything to do with money."

As for Gaines's paternalism, Freas found it "pleasantful, but you can't live with it for too long because you come to

depend on it."

When did it start, this penchant for fatherliness? MAD's editor, Al Feldstein, saw it back in the 1950's, when he and Gaines plotted horror comics together. "When I wrote a script, my first and foremost motivation was for Bill to read it and enjoy it. Bill supplied my need for a father. For this I did all I could to earn his love."

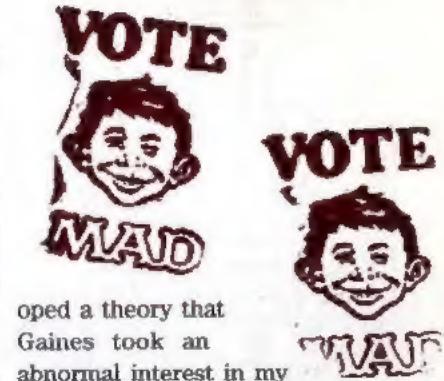
"Gaines is a father image," agrees Putnam. "I've found myself wanting to give him things in return. He can be a warm friend and yet keeps a workable distance between himself and his employees. I'm never made to feel like an employee, but I'm not going to walk all over him — no one is."

While writing this book, I devel-

Alfred E. Neuman for President



One of the 30 MAD front covers illustrated by longtime contributor Kelly Freas.



oped a theory that Gaines took an abnormal interest in my disease. I asked him about it.

"What the hell are you talking about?" he retorted.

"Don't you remember when I had that problem with my stomach? You were the only person who seemed interested when I went into detail about the treatment," I said.

"I was interested in you, not your G**damn treatment," he snarled.

Gaines is a social animal and this sometimes ruins his attempts at paternalism. I mean, how can you project a father image when you're zipping like a lunatic around the Statue of Liberty in an outboard with Dick DeBartolo? Or when you're getting zonked on

Chianti with The

Beard in a street dive in Rome? Or when a planeload of your hirelings, heading home from five days in San Juan, are breaking you up singing "F**k you, Bill," to the tune of "Over There"?

On the last night of the MAD trip to Haiti, a bunch of us, including Gaines, took a table, chairs, and service for four and arranged them elegantly for breakfast

(Continued on page 54)

"How can you project a father image when you're zipping like a lunatic around the Statue of Liberty?"



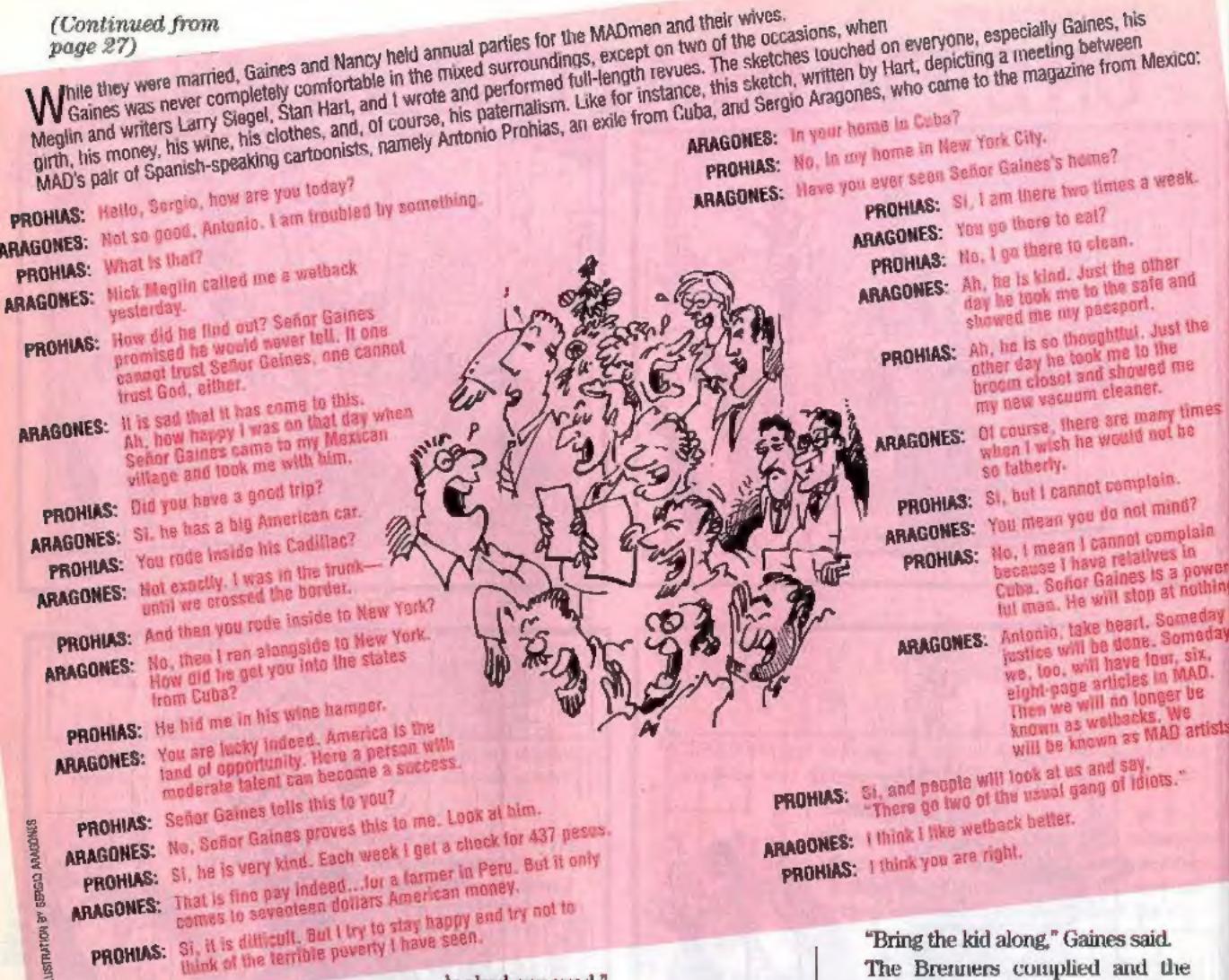


ILLUSTRATION BY SERGIO ARAGONES

PROHIAS: Hello, Sergio, how are you today?

ARAGONES: Not so good, Antonio. I am troubled by something.

PROHIAS: What is that?

ARAGONES: Nick Meglin called me a wetback yesterday.

PROHIAS: How did he find out? Señor Gaines promised he would never tell. If one cannot trust Señor Gaines, one cannot trust God, either.

ARAGONES: It is sad that it has come to this. Ah, how happy I was on that day when Señor Gaines came to my Mexican village and took me with him.

PROHIAS: Did you have a good trip?

ARAGONES: Si, he has a big American car.

PROHIAS: You rode inside his Cadillac?

ARAGONES: Not exactly. I was in the trunk—until we crossed the border.

PROHIAS: And then you rode inside to New York?

ARAGONES: No, then I ran alongside to New York. How did he get you into the states from Cuba?

PROHIAS: He hid me in his wine hamper.

ARAGONES: You are lucky indeed. America is the land of opportunity. Here a person with moderate talent can become a success.

PROHIAS: Señor Gaines tells this to you?

ARAGONES: No, Señor Gaines proves this to me. Look at him.

PROHIAS: Si, he is very kind. Each week I get a check for 437 pesos.

ARAGONES: That is fine pay indeed...for a farmer in Peru. But it only comes to seventeen dollars American money.

PROHIAS: Si, it is difficult. But I try to stay happy and try not to think of the terrible poverty I have seen.

ARAGONES: In your home in Cuba?

PROHIAS: No, in my home in New York City.

ARAGONES: Have you ever seen Señor Gaines's home?

PROHIAS: Si, I am there two times a week.

ARAGONES: You go there to eat?

PROHIAS: No, I go there to clean.

ARAGONES: Ah, he is kind. Just the other day he took me to the safe and showed me my passport.

PROHIAS: Ah, he is so thoughtful. Just the other day he took me to the broom closet and showed me my new vacuum cleaner.

ARAGONES: Of course, there are many times when I wish he would not be so fatherly.

PROHIAS: Si, but I cannot complain.

ARAGONES: You mean you do not mind?

PROHIAS: No, I mean I cannot complain because I have relatives in Cuba. Señor Gaines is a powerful man. He will stop at nothing.

ARAGONES: Antonio, take heart. Someday justice will be done. Someday we, too, will have four, six, eight-page articles in MAD. Then we will no longer be known as wetbacks. We will be known as MAD artists.

PROHIAS: Si, and people will look at us and say, "There go two of the usual gang of idiots."

ARAGONES: I think I like wetback better.

PROHIAS: I think you are right.

— in the deep end of the swimming pool. The next morning, Nick Meglin, who had retired early the night before, got up for a pre-breakfast swim. He saw the submerged set and gasped.

"Oh, my God! What drunken nut in this crew did this?"

Meglin, with great effort, removed the items from the pool. Later that morning, he ran into Gaines, who was seething.

"This is it," Meglin said to himself. "The hotel's found out and the manager's been chewing out Bill."

Meglin approached Gaines. "What's the matter, Bill? You

looked annoyed."

Gaines's eyes blazed. "After all our work, some G**damn idiot emptied the pool."

Meglin changed the subject.

Gaines hates the standard kind of party, where people sit around trying to make small talk, but he relishes any kind of offbeat get-together. One night in 1965, he and wife Nancy were planning to tour the New York World's Fair with Arnie and Sue Kogen. A thunder shower kept them from going, but didn't dampen Gaines's enthusiasm.

"I know what we'll do," he told the Kogens. "We'll go from house to house and pick up the MAD people and have a party."

The first stop was the apartment of The Beard and his wife, Claire. The Brenners had a year-old baby.

"Bring the kid along," Gaines said.

The Brenners couplied and the group drove out to the suburbs to fetch artist Mort Drucker and his wife, Barbara. The Druckers joined the caravan, which then proceeded to the house of the then-married Al Jaffees.

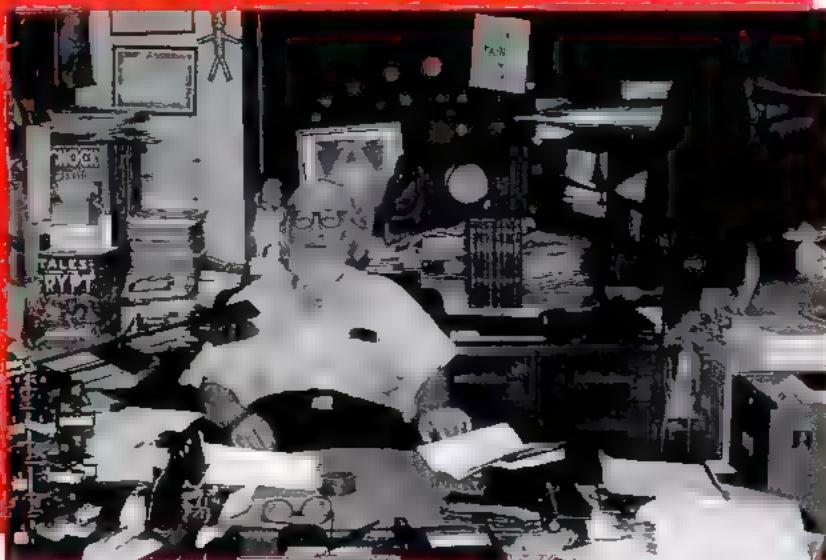
When Jaffee went to

On a door is a plaque with an inscription, translated from the Japanese, which used to adorn the walls of Geisha houses:

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE STAFF
DO NOT FORGET THE BENEFITS
YOU RECEIVE HERE
AND DO NOT, THEREFORE,
COMPLAIN OF ANYTHING
DO NOT TELL LIES
DO NOT BE UNREASONABLE
HONOR YOUR ELTERS AND BETTERS
BE GLAD YOU'RE ALIVE

Gaines put up the plaque believing its words might have some meaning for his employees. He was mistaken.





Gaines behind his allegedly "immaculate" desk, circa 1960.

father's, and may or may not, depending on his mood of the moment, reveal that it isn't. On top of the cabinet are a cup, saucer, and milk glass bearing pictures of Shirley Temple. "I don't know why I keep them," Gaines says. "I wasn't especially fond of Shirley Temple."

Behind his desk are two framed diplomas certifying that he is both a Minister and a Doctor of Divinity of the Church of the Universal Brotherhood. The certificates can be purchased, for a small contribution, by anyone. The only explanation that Gaines, an atheist, can give for buying them is that they give the right to perform marriages. So far, he's had no takers.

Other walls bear the originals of MAD covers. For years, Gaines used the same picture framer, but recently the man died. Since then, no covers have been framed. Gaines maintains this is because there is no more wall space. John Putnam is convinced that Gaines, being an indomitable creature of habit, was comfortable with his old framer and when the man died, opted to store MAD's covers unframed rather than go through the agonies of initiating

a new relationship.

When one visits Gaines at work, one faces a slovenly man sitting at an immaculate desk. The desk is checked by its owner many times a day to make sure that each item thereon is in its proper place. One notes a No Smoking sign and one soon finds that one may not light up. Gaines once chain-smoked, gave up the habit, and now can't stand the sight or smell of cigarettes.

Dwarfing everything else on the desk is a circular rack on which hang thirty rubber stamps, nearly all of which Gaines uses regularly. Many of them bear the names and addresses of people Gaines regularly corresponds with, and thus save him the time of inscribing outgoing mail by hand. Gaines admits that he needs more than thirty rubber stamps, but, again, being a creature of habit, he makes due with what he has.

"Why don't you buy another rack and place it alongside?" he was asked recently.

"Because my clock is there."

"Why not move the clock?"

"I like it where it is."

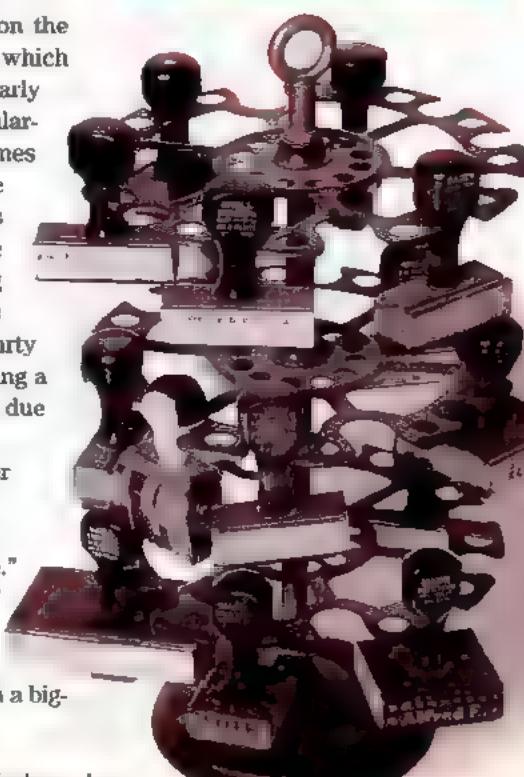
"Why not replace your current rubber-stamp rack with a big-

ger, double-size rubber-stamp rack?"

"Because it might topple over."

Attention: *Guinness Book of World Records*. Gaines's most noteworthy rubber stamp, which he uses to inscribe the back of every check he makes out to MAD's contributors, bears a single sentence of 104 words, which may well be the wordiest, one-sentence rubber stamp in the history of man. It reads.

Endorsement by the payee of this check shall constitute his, her, or its acknowledgment of the receipt of payment in full for the work, labor, services or materials furnished to E.C. Creations, Inc., as described on the face thereof and of the absolute transfer and sale by the payee to E.C. Creations, Inc. of all his, her, or its right, title, and interest in all artistic, literary or other property so conveyed and an authorization to E.C. Creations, Inc. or its assignees or transferees to use and re-use all or part thereof in any form or medium without further compensation.



Gaines's most cherished possession is his calendar, on which, in a script that only he can decipher, he writes his missions for the day. As each task is completed, he blackens out the notation with savage satisfaction. Gaines must get his calendar crossed out by the end of the day. Let us illustrate this with an example:

Gaines comes to work at 10 A.M., glances at his calendar, and sees twelve notations for the day, one of which is "Call Lou Silverstone." Gaines dials the number of Silverstone, who is one of MAD's writers. There is no answer. Gaines summons associate editor Jerry DeFuccio.

"I've got to talk to Silverstone. Keep trying him."

PHOTO COURTESY OF ADP FOR "MAD"



Harvey Kurtzman, MAD's first editor, left MAD after a fight with Gaines over control of the magazine.

An hour goes by. Gaines, who meanwhile has crossed out six items on his calendar, begins to fidget. He summons DeFuccio.

"Did you get hold of Silverstone?"

DeFuccio reports the line is busy. Gaines returns to his duties. At 1 P.M. he has crossed out nine items on his calendar. He summons DeFuccio, but DeFuccio has gone to lunch. Gaines is getting restive. At 2:30 he summons DeFuccio.

"What about Silverstone?"

DeFuccio explains that he

This weathered door plaque greeted visitors to the MAD offices at 445 Madison Avenue for 29 years.

has reached Silverstone's wife, who expects Silverstone home any moment. Gaines continues working. At 4:45 he has crossed out eleven of the twelve notations on his calendar. He pounds his right foot on the floor in impatience and summons DeFuccio.

"Silverstone."

DeFuccio reports that he has called again and that Silverstone has been delayed and won't be home for at least an hour. Gaines rips the day's page from the calendar and scribbles "Call Lou Silverstone" on the page for the next day. He straightens up his desk and goes home. Whatever he does that evening will be clouded by the knowledge that he was unable to cross out "Call Lou Silverstone."

The next morning Gaines comes to work at 10 A.M. He glances at his calendar, then picks up the phone and dials Silverstone. Someone answers. It is Silverstone.

"Lou, I just wanted to tell you how much I liked that article you did on TV commercials in the last issue."



The mood at MAD is often casual and the activity chaotic, which is why Al Feldstein works much of the time with his door closed. He admits he has built up a sequestered image, but has found it the only way of working amid the bedlam.

Through the years, Feldstein's closed-door policy has impressed

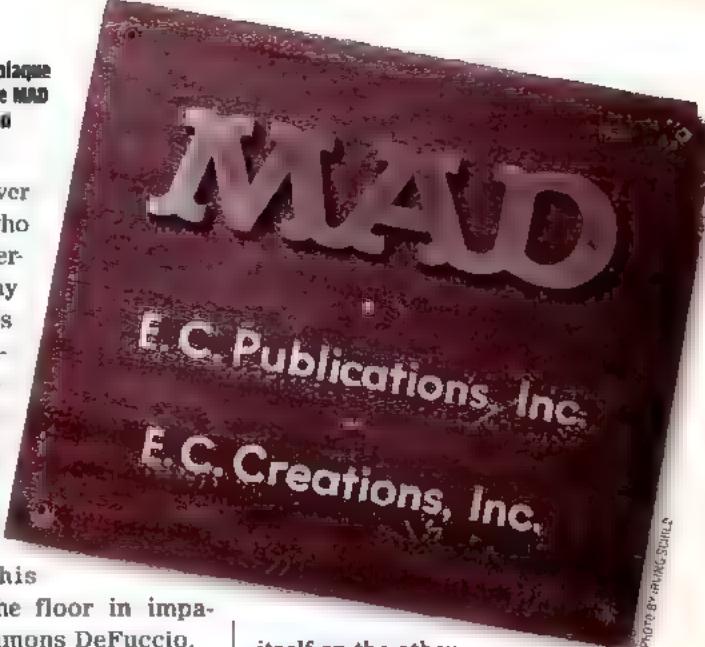
itself on the other

MADmen. One morning, Al Jaffee had a 10:30 script conference set up with Feldstein, Nick Meglin and Jerry DeFuccio. Feldstein's door was closed and no one dared intrude. Finally, around noon, Jaffee knocked on the door and poked his head in.

"Where have you been?" asked Feldstein, looking up from an article he was putting into the works. "I've been waiting for you."

Feldstein edits MAD with a kind of ruthless energy. He arrives late in the morning and works without letup until 6 P.M. Other staffers break for lunch, the editor dines at his desk and leaves his office only when necessary. It has been said that Feldstein strides down the hall to the men's room with the determination of a man en route to the most important conference of his career.

"Al possesses three times the energy of the rest of us," calculates DeFuccio. The ratio may not be absolute, but I do know that Feldstein's workday leaves little time for socializing. One contributor has likened getting a phone call from Feldstein with receiving a tele-



gram at two in the morning. The recipient knows instantly that whatever the message, it will not involve small talk.

When a conference with a writer or artist is over, Feldstein returns at once to the article he was working on before the conference started. After one meeting, I remained in his office and began talking gibberish; it took a full minute for my babbling to penetrate Feldstein's mind, which was now completely on the page of dialogue in his typewriter. At last he looked up.

"Are you still here?"

I left, closing the door behind me.

Feldstein's face and

accomplishments

have been featured

in half a dozen

national maga-

zines and

countless news-

papers. Nonethe-

less, I frequently

meet people who

believe that Harvey

Kurtzman, who hasn't

worked for Gaines

since 1956, still edits

MAD. I attribute this in part to what

has been called the Kurtzman cult,

which began when MAD was a comic

book and lingers on even today.

"People remember 'firsts,'" says

Kurtzman, who is in regular demand

as a speaker at comic conventions

and writers' gatherings. "It's the same

in any field, like remembering the

man who flew the first plane over the

Atlantic."

"Kurtzman started MAD. Feldstein

made it a commercial success," says

Gaines. "Giving Harvey credit for

MAD is like giving Robert Fulton

credit every time a new ocean liner is

launched."

"If Kurtzman's

name is more of a

household word

today than Feld-

ILLUSTRATION BY SERGIO ARAGONES



stein's, it is partly because Feldstein has made little effort to mingle with his peers in the publishing world. Kurtzman, despite being what he

calls a "super-private person" is friendly

with numerous

editors and writers

of the literary establish-

ment. Feldstein has never explored that realm, in fact sel- dom fraternizes with anyone connected with MAD. He tunes

in to his work in the

morning and tunes

out at night.

He calls himself "a mercenary on

the worst level," which would appear

to mean that he edits MAD only for

his salary, which happens to be larger

than that of any editor in the world.

Whatever his motivation, he has per-

formed a remarkable juggling act,

taking the output of two dozen free-

lances and blending it every forty-five

days into forty-eight pages of crisp,

readable humor.



"What do we need him for,"

Gaines wondered when John

Putnam came to work as art direc-

tor. Being an old comic-book person,

Gaines didn't

understand

Leno Brenner shares

a tender moment

with Arthur the Plant.

was a magazine that required special layouts and typefaces. He would walk into the art department and eye Putnam suspiciously. "What does he do?" he would ask no one in particular

For several weeks, Gaines looked on Putnam as an intruder and greeted him with studied politeness. This worried Putnam until one afternoon Gaines stood outside the art department and recited off a list of Putnam's sexual aberrations. The list was entirely spurious, but Putnam knew, at last, that he had been accepted.

Putnam is a curious blend of intellectual, Francophile, hippie, collector, and dirty old man. He is a



grandfather and the oldest member of the salaried staff, but in outlook is the youngest person in the place. His interests range from stamp-collecting to the rock culture, from appreciating Beethoven string quartets to grooving folk guitar in lava-lit walk-ups. For years, he lived in a flea-sized, one-room Greenwich Village apartment that served as combination living and sleeping quarters, music room, sculpture studio, camera den, and model railroad museum. In the center of the room, taking up the last of the available space, sat a large, faded, stuffed armchair. "For homeliness," he explained.

At MAD, Putnam's work area abounds with mixed treasures. Remains of salami slices fight for space with pieces of artwork. Orange rinds nestle with pencils and paper clips. I asked him how many bits of food he had spilled on layouts. "None," he said. "Fortunately, my

clothes get in the way."

Nick Meglin doubts this. "John will come in and ask to borrow my knife in order to cut some cheese. I'll tell him, 'Sure, John, but please return the knife when you're through with it.' John will look offended, hurt that someone would doubt his reliability to return something."

"Four weeks later," concludes Meglin, "the knife will turn up with a piece of artwork, both streaked orange with cheese."

The old MAD offices on Lafayette Street were infested with cockroaches, most of them lured by Putnam's insatiable lust for Italian delicacies and breadstuffs.

"Roaches from as faraway as Elizabeth Street and Great Jones Street must have raised their antennae in the air and come running to the feast I left about," he has said. "Gaines



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF NICK MEGLIN

John Putnam in a photo we have no clue about.

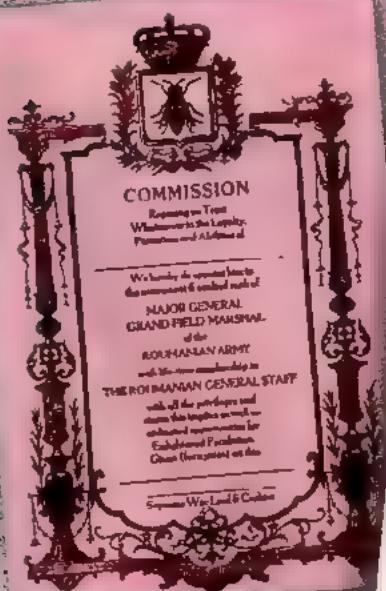
have gotten rid of me."

Putnam stores MAD artwork in drawers labeled "Pornography," "Dirty Pictures," "Transvestia"

The practice reflects his Rabelaisian side. When MAD moved uptown, Putnam bought a pair of high-power binoculars, in the hope of detecting scenes of hanky-panky in nearby office buildings. Sadly, he has reported that the people he has observed are fully clothed and working.

He does a tremendous amount of work, but one wonders when he finds the time. Recently, he made up and sent his friends a handsome certificate commissioning them "Major General Grand Field Marshal of the Roumanian Army." Accompanying the certificate was a letter, informing each appointee that he had a choice of units to command, among them "The Sixth Battalion of Gypsy Malingers," "The 405th Airborne Bidet Repair Team," and "The Roumanian All-Violin Military Band."

(Continued on
page 86)



Art Director John Putnam's phony Roumanian Army certificate and accompanying letter.



Dear Major General Grand Field-Marshal
Welcome to the Roumanian General Staff as a new member you
will share in the advantages our organization offers to our
members and will everywhere be a Roumanian hero
you have the glorious opportunity to keep high
honor, poverty, ignorance and anything similar conditions to
the Roumanian Army will be unknown to you
to our new commands, such as Colonel-in-Chief of
the Roumanian Guards, Honorable Officer of the King
Honorable General Commandant, the members of the 10th
Infantry, 10th Cavalry and 10th Dragoon as well
as Roumanian Officer of the 10th Dragoon Military
Band always remember that you are a Roumanian Officer and
that by our motto "We have never won a battle we lost the
day in the bedroom of our best friend's wife."





FRIM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF ANNE GAINES

Gaines personally hand-wrote and signed every contributor's check.

It was Putnam who grew the giant avocado plant that became immortalized in MAD as Arthur. A few years later, he grew another plant, a leafy sprout of cannabis sativa, which he kept hidden behind a piece of cardboard. One day Feldstein saw the greenery, recognized it for what it was, and said strongly, "You want us to get arrested? Get that thing out of here." Putnam complied. He removed the plant from its pot, or vice versa, cured its leaves, and saw that it was disposed of in a non-wasteful manner.

Another time, a seven-foot-high filing cabinet in a wooded crate was delivered to the office. After the cabinet was removed, Putnam nailed the crate back together and left it standing outside the MAD offices. He marked the crate "Ace Zoo Supply," punched several small air-holes in the sides, and pasted on a detailed list of "Feeding Instructions." For many days, passersby from other offices on the floor would huddle around the crate, speculating as to what sort of creature was encased within.

Considering his freakiness, Putnam is remarkably untemperamental

and seldom outspoken, giving the impression of a timid, if offbeat, rabbit. When MAD moved uptown, Gaines and Feldstein decided who was going to work where. Putnam was upset that the art department would be enclosed in the only room without windows.

"So you'll have artificial light," Feldstein said.

Putnam thought for a moment, then said quietly, "Unless the art department has natural light, I

shall have to look for employment elsewhere."

Gaines and Feldstein were staggered. The office arrangement was restudied, and Putnam got his natural light.

During one period, Gaines decreed that none of the staff could moonlight. The edict troubled

Deposit 10
Mad
Mad Editors
Educational Comics, Inc.
E.C. PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Putnam, who enjoyed turning out offbeat essays for *The Realist*, an iconoclastic pulp edited by friend Paul Krassner. Putnam announced

that if he wasn't allowed to write for Krassner, he would be forced to

leave. Gaines relaxed his rule, mostly because Putnam was not being paid for his outside



writing. Feldstein sided with Putnam, seeing no conflict, although how Putnam could do any work for nothing was beyond him.

MAD articles, touching as they do every aspect of today's world, contain pictures of all sorts of specially printed matter. Thanks to Putnam's knowledge of typefaces, the magazine's versions of spoofed-up soap boxes, appliance warranties, movie logotypes and the rest are meticulous mirrors of the originals.

"John can simulate anything from The Racing Form to the Magna Carta," says Jerry DeFuccio. "I've seen him spend an entire afternoon duplicating the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval."

To my mind, Putnam's finest hour came early in his career. He had sent down a piece of copy in which the word "America" began on one line and ended on the next. The foreman at the typesetting plant sent the copy back to Putnam, explaining that there was a union rule forbidding the splitting of our nation's name. Putnam rewrote the copy and sent it back to the foreman, along with the following enclosure:

Don't Break America
(sung to the tune of "God Bless America")

*Don't break America—
Land we extol;
Don't deface it, upper-case it;
Keep it pure, keep it clean, keep it whole;
In Bodoni, in Futura,
In Old English, in Cabell—
Don't break America—
Or we'll...raise...hell!*



The most popular place at MAD is Nick Meglin's office, the chosen resting place for staffers, visiting freelances, and, especially, Gaines. When the magazine moved to its present day confines, Meglin was given one of the smaller rooms. He

soon became aware that the room was not large enough to hold the people who were continually visiting him, so he appropriated the more spacious conference room, which had never been used for conferences anyway.

Gaines decided that Meglin

"It was Putnam who grew the giant avocado plant that became immortalized in MAD as Arthur."

moved into the conference room because it had a carpet and that Meglin considered a carpet a status symbol. This wasn't true, but for weeks Gaines made it his business to stand casually in Meglin's doorway and dribble coffee on the carpet.

the MAD field, it is Meglin whom they call to tell the good news.

Meglin searches for new writing talent for the magazine and reads all unsolicited material carefully. Four of MAD's veteran writers — Larry Siegel, Dick DeBartolo, Stan Hart, and Lou Silverstone — came into the fold as a result of Meglin's encouragement.

DeBartolo mailed in his first article with a

self-addressed envelope. About six weeks later, the envelope came back. DeBartolo, believing the piece had been rejected, threw the envelope in a drawer. A few days later, he opened the envelope to see if he had received, at least, a hand-



It has been speculated that the body of Jimmy Hoffa, the Lost Ark of the Covenant and Atlantis were buried among the junk in Editor Nick Meglin's office.

Meglin would try not to notice, which wasn't too difficult because he usually was engrossed on the phone.

Meglin is constantly on the phone — very often on matters of business. He serves as a pipeline between the freelances and Feldstein, and scarcely a week goes by without Meglin phoning each of them at least once. When a writer scores a coup outside

written rejection slip. The envelope was stuffed with cardboard, on which was attached a check. Written on the cardboard was a note "Ha! Thought you were getting your manuscript back, didn't you? Send us more." Nick Meglin.

Meglin laughs





now owned by Meglin, who got them in exchange for a half-filled tool kit and several items of camera equipment, none of which Gaines has any use for. Says Gaines, "I've always had this feeling that Nick has this attic full of junk you couldn't give away." Says Meglin, "Everything I get from Gaines is useless; it's just a matter of degree."

No one at MAD matches Meglin's gift for the fast gag. One afternoon, the



"Trigger," he said without blinking. Jerry DeFuccio has been called MAD's token gentleman. Gaines took him once to a very important business conference involving MAD and one of its corporate owners. "Jerry didn't say a word the entire time," Gaines relates, "but his mere presence added class to the meeting."

A handsome, urbane bachelor of

Savoy ancestry, DeFuccio serves as the magazine's contact with the outside world. It is he who maintains correspondence with the magazine's readers, some of whom

are celebrities. A favorite penpal is Candice Bergen. DeFuccio had read that the actress was bereft on losing her Heinz pickle pin, which she valued for sentimental reasons. DeFuccio located one and mailed it to her. Miss Bergen, a long-time reader, thanked him, adding, "Without MAD, it would have been harder to survive a Republican upbringing."

DeFuccio has exchanged letters with, among others, Paul Newman, Joey Heatherton, Clint Eastwood, and David Janssen. When Gloria Orlando, who heads MAD's subscription department, received an

"Without MAD, it would have been harder to survive a Republican upbringing."

est, he began cheering for the Cornhuskers.

"I hate you, Frank," he once told me. "Because of you, I find myself rooting for a team I never cared about, have never followed, and have no logical reason to support."

Meglin is a sucker for a bargain and, as such, is constantly making trades, usually with Gaines, who lures him into ridiculous exchanges.

Before Gaines grew his beard, he owned a succession of six electric shavers, none of which performed satisfactorily. All are

staff gathered in his office to watch an 8 mm dirty movie, the leading character of which was a successful call girl. Midway through the film, Meglin's phone rang. He instantly picked up the receiver, extended it toward the girl on the screen, and said, "It's for you."

One night, Meglin, myself, and our wives were at the harness races. I suggested that we merge our bets in a show pool, but it was getting close to post time and Meglin hadn't made a selection. "Come on, Nick," I said, "what's a good show horse?"

Everybody into the pool: Jerry DeFuccio, Stan Hart, Henry Brenner and George Woodbridge on a MAD trip.



order for a gift subscription to Spiro Agnew, she notified DeFuccio, who filed it away in his cross-indexed storehouse of salient MAD trivia. Some of his examples:

"Jon Voight came up to the office

in the hope that we might give him a page to draw. We didn't."

"When Jill St. John divorced Lance Reventlow, she got custody of their MAD subscription."

"After Eva Marie Saint saw herself

pictured in our version of *The Sandpiper*, she was so thrilled that she wrote she was buying a subscription. She said she was looking forward to seeing herself in future issues. Of course, she hasn't been pictured since."

"One of our first admirers was Bergen Evans, who edited *The Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage*. He cited the language in MAD to be 'particularly trenchant.'

"Once we got a phone call from two guys who said they were high up in the phone company. It turned out they were telephone linemen and were calling us from the top of a pole."

"After we did a parody of a Scotch Tape ad, a man from Texcel Tape called and asked how to get MAD to do a take off of a Texcel ad. I told him to just come up with an idiotic ad campaign. We'd do the rest."

Recently, DeFuccio

(I am sitting quietly in the art department, waiting to go into a script conference. Brenner turns around from his drawing board and sees me)

BRENNER: What are you doing here?
ME: Just sitting, waiting.
BRENNER: You writers are too bushy!
(End of conversation)

(A MAD trip. George Woodbridge stands in line waiting to check into a hotel in San Juan)

BRENNER: You can't check into a double room.

WOODBRIDGE: Why not?

BRENNER: Because you're on Bill's sh** list!

(He turns immediately and walks away)

(The last day of the MAD trip. we have been told to leave our suitcases in Gaines's room. I carry mine in and find myself facing Brenner)

ME: Is this where we leave our suitcases?

BRENNER: Not for you!

(Exit Brenner)

(The flight home. The plane is flying through an air pocket, roughing up everyone. Including Brenner and his seatmate, Al Jaffee)

JAFFEE: This is certainly a bumpy flight.

BRENNER: Could you do better?

(End of conversation)

(At the coffee wagon in the hall outside the MAD office. Brenner stands behind a girl from a neighboring office)

GIRL: I think I'll have a Danish.

BRENNER: No Danish for you! You're too fat for Danish!

(The girl is thereafter ignored)

I've never heard Brenner express an opinion about a MAD article. Nick Meglin claims this is because Brenner never reads anything in the magazine, even while working on it. Naturally, he refused to be interviewed for this book, but despite such disaffection he makes his presence felt throughout the day, especially through his inexplicable relationship with Gaines.

(Brenner stalks into Gaines's office)

BRENNER: You and your G**damn Cadillac!

(Exit Brenner)

The above explains Meglin is Brenner's way of saying good morning. Equally difficult to comprehend is the following cross-employee dialogue:

(Gaines walks into the art department)

BRENNER: What the hell do you want?

GAINES: I just came in to find a book.

BRENNER: Well, it's not here. Get the hell out!

(Exit Gaines humbly)



This Scotch Tape ad spoof prompted a call from a rival tape maker. Nick Meglin plays the thief.

announced he was getting married. No one believed it, because he had made the same announcement eight times previously. DeFuccio has never bought an engagement ring although he has given away his college dramatics pin, school ring, and other tokens of his esteem amounting to several thousand dollars.

In any given year, DeFuccio mails gifts to his girlfriends in quantities exceeding the Christmas card list of most families. To commemorate the MAD trip to the Orient, he brought back sixteen happy coats, at twenty dollars apiece, from the Tatsumura Silk Works in Kyoto. However, he underestimated the number of women in his life and had to order twenty more. In Copenhagen, he bought eighteen handmade Norwegian sweaters. He was so taken with the salesgirl that on returning to New York he airmailed her an Italian sweater from Lord and Taylor.

When MAD does a movie or TV satire, it is DeFuccio who digs up the photographs on which Mort





violent, which he isn't, but because of his pose of power, standing there like the iceberg that sank the *Titanic*," says Nick Meglin.

A compact, goateed fellow who in winter wears a woolly sweater and beret to match, Brenner is the master of the aggressive non sequitur, a kind of remark designed to throw its victim off guard, leaving him incapable of making a coherent response. Some selected incidents that have prompted Brennerisms:

"One morning," Meglin recalls, "I saw Gaines come out of his office to get a drink of water. As he came out, he saw Brenner standing between him and the water cooler. Gaines turned around and went back into his office. The gamble was too great. Clearly, it was better to die of thirst than to risk passing Brenner in the hall."

MAD has a petty cash fund that staffers borrow from. Gaines permits this so long as any sum borrowed is returned within a few days. Brenner has often borrowed money from petty cash and has always returned it promptly — except for ten dollars that he has kept outstanding since 1964. Gaines, for reasons known only to himself, prefers not to make an issue of it.

Knowing his employer's reliance on his rubber stamps

Drucker and Angelo Torres base their caricatures. In the early days, studios and networks refused to cooperate, believing that a MAD take-off could only downgrade a property. This didn't faze DeFuccio, who merely contacted one of the many young women he knew who worked on *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue*, and *McCall's*. The chosen miss would request the desired photos for her magazine and then send them on to DeFuccio.

Such subterfuge is no longer required. "Today, movie companies are delighted when MAD satirizes their films," he says. "So are the TV outfits. This is because the studios and networks are filled with people who grew up on MAD as teenagers."

Everyone was aware that John Putnam was overworked and needed an assistant. No one, however, was prepared for the young man who got the job. He was and is Leonard (The Beard) Brenner, who, as assistant art director, casts a strange, pugnacious, somewhat indescribable spell over the MAD office.

"We all live in fear of Brenner, not because he is



Not exactly the Hell's Angels: Gaines posing on a stationary motorcycle for a 1972 TV Guide parody.

and calendar, Brenner constantly threatens to destroy them. One day he hid the calendar. Gaines went bananas. He knew Brenner had no logical reason to hide the calendar — Brenner has no logical reason for almost everything he does — but it turned him into a supplicant. Gaines pleaded, even offered to buy the calendar back for \$1.27. Brenner let the suffering continue for an hour, then returned the calendar.

"Your Burgundies stink," he said and stalked out.

The men of MAD have gathered for many parties, but only once has there been a testimonial banquet. It took place in 1971 at Little Charlie's, and the person honored was Brenner. It was a surprise party and Brenner was duly surprised. He responded to the honor with appropriate behavior by sitting by himself at a table and speaking to no one until the dinner was over.



Leonard Brenner with a clarinet he didn't know how to play.

LEONARD BRENNER
ART DIRECTOR

COMING UP NEXT

Gaines inherits his father's comics line in 1947. Against the advice of the old guard at E.C., he and Al Feldstein shock the establishment with their groundbreaking horror and crime comics.



THE **MAD** WORLD
OF
WILLIAM M. GAINES Part II
BY FRANK JACOBS

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THE STORY SO FAR

After examining the eccentricities and work habits of Gaines, we've gotten a close-up view of the cast of characters comprising MAD's in-house staff in 1972.

CHAPTER 8

YOU'LL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING

What can you say about a hare-brained, bumbling adolescent who grows up to become a millionaire publisher? We have been told that behind every successful man stands a woman. Behind Bill Gaines stood his father, a man who expected the worst from his son and was rarely disappointed.

Max Gaines remained convinced to the day he died that Bill would never amount to anything. He regularly communicated this belief by remarking, "You'll never amount to anything." Max would have preferred to have sired a son who was handy around the house, trustworthy with family possessions, obedient to his elders, and quietly dependable. Someone more, perhaps, like Bill's good friend, George Rabin, who could repair a screen door and clean out a drain spout. But Max had Bill, and Bill, so Max seemed to believe, was an odds-on favorite to win the title of World's Greatest Klutz.

Max liked boats. Bill hated them because they continually had to be scrubbed down and polished. Such tasks required physical effort, and physical effort was something to be avoided. When Max did allow Bill to use the

family vessel, it rarely came back in the condition it left in. During a fraternity outing, Bill let an outboard motor fall to the bottom of Long Island Sound. Another time a rope broke and an anchor disappeared into the depths forever. On another occasion, Bill put his foot through a cabin window. The fates were not kind. Bill might embark under cloudless skies, but once at sea his fair day would turn foul, the barometer would plummet, and the boat would be gripped by a raging storm. He would find himself helpless at the helm, one hand attempting to guide the boat, the other struggling unsuccessfully to prevent the dishes

An uncharacteristically angelic-looking Bill Gaines in the late 1920s.

stored in the cabin from shattering at his feet. At such moments, fearful of his father's wrath when he returned home, Bill would shake his head, wishing perhaps there were a God he could complain to, and moan to himself, "Why me?"

Why Bill indeed? Perhaps it was because whenever Bill took out the boat his father warned him not to

do anything stupid. "I was always a bumbling idiot around my father," he admits. "I don't know whether it was because I knew it would drive him out of his mind, which it did, or because he scared me into being a bumbling idiot. When he was teaching me to drive, I always used to turn left, for no particular reason, without him telling me to. It drove him crazy."

"Bill always seemed to be doing what my parents didn't want him to do," recalls his sister, Elaine. "They tried to get him to stop biting his nails. Bill's answer was to let his nails grow until they were half an inch long."

Bill constantly ran afoul of his father's temper, which was formidable. Although Max rarely became angry with Elaine, he could not restrain himself with Bill. One day, Bill, in an argument with his mother, screamed out a two-word directive that sons, in those days at least, rarely used with their mothers.

"Tell your father what you said to me," Jessie Gaines declared, as Max arrived home from work that night.

"I won't," Bill said with considerable discomfort.

"Tell me what you said to her!" Max roared.

Bill told him, fearing an attack on his person. The fear was well-founded. Max removed his belt and gave Bill the beating of his life.

"Max did not see his role as a father as a man who puts his son on his lap and tells him stories," says Bill's aunt, Edith Gaines. "I think Max was



Gaines and boyhood friend George Rabin in 1939.



When Max Gaines was four years old he leaned too far out a window and tumbled two stories to the ground catching his leg on a picket fence in the process. The leg gave him great pain the rest of his life and may have aggravated his disposition. It certainly didn't help it. Bill's friend, Walter Kast, recalls observing the following scene, which took place at Gaines's dinner table.

(Max Gaines looks up from his place at head of the table and focuses on his wife)

MAX: Jessie, it's boiling hot in here. Did the man come to fix the thermostat today?

JESSIE: No, Max.

MAX: Why not?

JESSIE: I forgot to call him.

(Max rises from table, strides to wall, rips off thermostat, and throws it across room)

MAX: Now, G**damn it, maybe you'll get it fixed. Ex! Max.

Max might yell at Jessie, but he never struck her. He deserved his physical attacks for his son and various inanimate objects. He treated Bill's friends, who were constantly hanging about with a gruff matter-of-factness. One day in the late summer of 1945, Kast, just out of the Army, got a phone call:

MAX: Wan, what are you doing?

WALTER: Oh, this and that.

MAX: Got a job?

WALTER: Not yet.

MAX: Then you're doing nothing. Well, you're going to do something. You're driving me up to Lake Placid. Goodbye.

Kast picked up Max at his office. On the drive to Lake Placid, where the Gaineses kept a summer home, Kast learned why he was needed. Max had a friend upstate who had slaughtered a cow

and was selling several hundred pounds of beef. Max bought it all and had Kast load it in the trunk of the car, after which they drove on to the lakeside house Kast was bringing in his first armload to the kitchen when this scene took place:

KAST: Which freezer should I put this in?

JESSIE: They're a ~~at~~ tall.

MAX: What?

JESSIE: As soon as rationing ended I filled it with all the meat and cream I could buy.

MAX: I told you I was buying this cow.

JESSIE: I forgot!

(Pause as Max does slow burn followed by unprintable outburst of profanity, followed by him grabbing roasts, steaks, etc., out of trunk of car and throwing them, one by one, into lake)



there was certain to be one dandy explosion when Max found out about it, but Jessie Gaines was made of stern stuff.

Bill, on the other hand, would go to great, laborious lengths to save himself from his father's rage. In September, 1946, during his first marriage, he was driving a Dodge convertible with eighty thousand miles on it. Max said that the car was going to fall apart and hinted strongly that Bill should trade in the G**damn heap. Bill refused. Two weeks later, the motor failed. Bill became terrified of his father finding out. Aided by four of his friends, all of whom understood Max's moods, he concocted a scheme.

Being autumn, it was time to bring down the furnishings from the summer house on Lake Placid. Bill and his friends bade his parents goodbye and piled in his Dodge and a station wagon, ostensibly to drive directly to the lake. The Dodge possessed just enough power to sputter across town to a garage run by a mechanic named Feeney, who also understood Max's moods. Bill left the Dodge with Feeney, who promised to install a new motor within two days, then climbed into the station wagon and drove with

extremely fond of Bill, but thought it would be a sign of weakness ever to show it."



Walter Kast became an inveterate Max-watcher, to the extent of formulating this quasi-mathematical Max Hypothesis. To wit, Max showed compassion in inverse proportion to his closeness to the people involved. As proof, Kast points to the time Max was driving to his house in White Plains and was stopped for speeding by a highway patrolman. Max said to the patrolman, "With all the troubles I've got, you've got to give me more trouble?"

"You don't know what troubles

are," the patrolman said. "I've got a kid in the hospital who may go blind if he doesn't have an operation."

Max's response was to pay the

"I think Max was extremely fond of Bill, but thought it would be a sign of weakness ever to show it."

entire hospital bill for the patrolman's son.

At home, Max's main problem may have been that he was overmatched by his wife. When, for instance, Jessie felt that her husband's weekly disbursements for household expenses were too small, she would solve the problem by kiting his checks. Of course,

his friends to Lake Placid.

Two days later, Bill phoned Feeney from the lake. "I haven't been able to get a new motor" said Feeney. Bill phoned his parents. "We're all having such a good time up here that we're going to stay a couple of more days."





Max and Jessie Gaines at their home in White Plains, 1945.

he told them. On the fourth day, Bill phoned Feeney again. "I found a new motor, but I can't get it today," said Feeney. At last, on the sixth day, Feeney announced that the Dodge was ready to be picked up.

Bill and his friends loaded the station wagon with the summer furnishings (many cartons of bedding, clothes, and kitchen utensils, plus four bicycles), then squeezed in themselves and drove back to White Plains. They stopped at Feeney's garage, where they picked up Bill's repaired Dodge and transferred half the goods into it. Then they drove to the Gaines house as if they had been using both the station wagon and the Dodge for six days.

The new motor cost four hundred dollars, a sum that Bill did not possess. He borrowed the money from friend Arthur

Dreeben. It took Bill six months to pay back the money, which he and his wife, Hazel, managed to save through the economy of eating only Vienna sausages through the entire period.

But his father never found out about the motor.

This might conclude our chapter on Max Gaines but for one other important accomplishment. This hard-nosed, pain-wracked, loud, aggressive man was the father of the American comic book.

He had studied to be a teacher, then worked, successively, as a high-school principal, a munitions factory worker, and a haberdasher. In 1930, he originated the "We Want

Beer" necktie, a popular novelty during the last years of Prohibition, then fell on the hard times of the Great Depression. The early 1930's were

But Max was a scrambler. One day in 1933, he was throwing out some old Sunday newspapers and found himself reading the comics. An idea took hold. If he enjoyed reading old comics, there were probably a lot of other people who would, too. He took the idea to a friend at Eastern Color Printing.

"We've tried it," the friend said, and showed Max a thirty-two-page collection of Sunday comics reprints that Eastern had done as a premium for Proctor and Gamble.

"Good idea," said Max.

"Lousy idea," said his friend. "Nobody likes it around here."

Max did and suggested that Eastern let him sell the scheme to other companies. Eastern agreed. Before the year was out, Max became the specialist in premium comic books. He came in with orders for hundreds of thousands of the magazines, which were given away by major retailers, such as Wheatena, Kinney Shoe Stores, and John Wanamaker.

He kept scrambling. Why bring out comic books as premiums for other people, he asked himself, when they could be sold directly to kids? In early 1934, he put together a 10-cent comic book called *Famous Funnies* and got Dell Publishing to back a printing of thirty-five thousand copies. This first *Famous Funnies*, available only in chain stores, sold out, but Dell pulled out of the deal. Unfazed, Max got Eastern to publish the comic, this time with distribution through newsstands. It was the nation's first monthly, normal-sized comic magazine.

Max was making money — enough to move the Gaineses into their own home in Brooklyn. One morning, so the family legend goes, Max drove to his office at Eastern and found that the lock on the door



lean years for Max and his family, who were forced to move in with his mother in the Bronx. There were nights when Max and Jessie went hungry so that Bill and Elaine wouldn't



had been changed. This was Eastern's way of bidding him good-bye. No one knew why he was let go, but Max scrambled onward, this time to the McClure Syndicate, which had recently purchased two huge two-color printing presses from a defunct newspaper, *The New York Graphic*. Said Max. "You've got two presses doing nothing. I'll keep them running. All I want is fifty percent of all the business I get for them."

Max hooked the two presses together and began turning out four-color premium items, one of which was a collection of "Skippy" comic pages for Phillips' Dental Magnesia. The presses were rolling, but not with full vigor. Max's mind turned again to newsstand comic books. There was, after all, no reason to allow *Famous Funnies* to keep the market all to itself, so he put together another batch of syndicated material and again approached Dell. An agreement was reached, and thus was born *Popular Comics*, which, with "Dick Tracy," "Little

Orphan Annie," "Terry and the Pirates," "Gasoline Alley," and "Skippy," was probably the best of the early comic books.

"It was a schlock operation," recalls Sheldon Mayer, who worked

those presses rolling.

Working for Max Gaines was often a mixed blessing. "He was in a perpetual state of apoplexy," says Mayer, who was only eighteen when Max hired him. "He treated me like his own son — rotten. I quit a dozen times on principle, but he always talked me into coming back by giving me more money. Even so, I was continually underpaid."

During the summers, Mayer had an additional burden — to find work for young Bill, whom Max brought in to run errands and make himself useful. Bill made his first appearance at the age of fourteen and immediately drove Mayer nuts by running through the office, pressing the buttons of the intercom system, and shouting, "Calling all cars! Calling all cars!"

Mayer, who was working at his drawing board, told Bill to sit down and not to move until so directed. Moments later, Mayer's concentration was interrupted by what seemed to be some kind of animal rising slowly around the back edge of his drawing board. It was Bill's hair. The hair was followed by the face, leering weirdly. Mayer was startled into action, which took the form of rapping the nose of the face with his T-square. The nose bled profusely; Mayer, in fact, had never seen so much blood in his life. He applied wet handkerchiefs to the nose and sent it and its owner home. Not long afterwards, Max, who had been out of the office during the rap session, phoned Mayer.

"Where's Bill?" he asked.

"He's not here," Mayer said.

"What do you mean he's not there?"

"I sent him home."

"Why the hell did you do that?"

"Because if I didn't, I was afraid

Bill made his first appearance at the age of fourteen and immediately drove Mayer nuts.

ten years as Max's editor and production chief. "We bought the material for practically nothing and slapped the books together. Max wasn't concerned with the literary or entertainment part of it. I had to argue to get him to run story strips like 'Terry and the Pirates' in chronological order. The dime comic books were just a small part of his operation. He was only interested in keeping those presses rolling."

So it was that a sizable portion of America's youth in the 1930's was lured to comic-book reading because of one man's desire to keep



Max Gaines introduced *Famous Funnies* to America in 1934. Oddly, the man on the scale resembles Bill Gaines as he looked in the 1950s.





Jerry Siegel (above)
and Joe Shuster



I might do him a physical injury."

"Well, why don't you do him a physical injury? It might do him some good."

"I did."

"Oh-oh. What did you do?"

Mayer told him. "Well," Max sighed, thinking ahead to facing Jessie that evening. "I just might have to spend the night in the office."

Bill did not return to the office that summer, but he did put in some time during subsequent vacation periods. Mayer noticed that Bill often showed flashes of brightness, and one day he made the mistake of telling Max that Bill was a smart kid. "Smart kid, huh?" Max snorted for weeks afterwards, and would proceed to relate Bill's most recent act of stupidity.

In the office as at home, Bill could not cope with his father's bluster. When Max required his son's services, he would shout, "Drop what you're doing!" Bill, no matter if he were carrying a pencil, a pile of magazines, or a cup of coffee, would comply literally.

Everyone in Max's office went to lunch at noon and came back an hour later. Bill decided that because his duties were so nebulous, he could set his own lunch hour. One day

he returned at 1:45.

"Where the hell have you been?" demanded Max.

Bill told him, whereupon Max, warning Bill never again to set such a bad example for the other employees, kicked him hard in the seat of the pants — in front of the other employees.

On a December day in 1937, Mayer was looking at a comic strip that had been submitted to McClure for possible syndication in newspapers. The strip

was called "Superman," and its creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, had been trying to sell it for four years. But comics were controlled by middle-aged men, whose ideas of adventure began with "Tarzan" and ended with "Slam Bradley." Mayer reacted to "Superman" with the enthusiasm of youth. "This stuff is great," he told Max. "Let's do something with it."

The wheels in Max's head began turning. He was handling the printing of Harry Donenfeld's new *Detective Comics* and knew that Donenfeld was thinking about

putting out another adventure magazine. Max had Mayer paste the strips into comic-book form, then sent "Superman" to Donenfeld. In a month or so, the Man of Steel made his debut as the lead feature in *Action Comics*. On seeing the cover, which showed Superman holding an automobile above his head, Donenfeld is reported to have had a fit. "Nobody's going to believe this," he said. "It's impossible."

Donenfeld, as the world now knows, was wrong. "Superman" not

only was able to lift a car, he could turn the comic industry upside down. Within a year, *Action Comics* was the biggest money-maker in the business. As for

Max, well, he had a fat new printing contract for his presses,



Max Gaines
let Siegel and Shuster's
creation Superman
slip through
his hands.





Gasoline Alley reprints appeared in *Popular Comics*, another Max Gaines title. In 1992 the newspaper strip returned the favor by including Bill Gaines and Alfred E. Neuman.

but that was all. In what Bill calls today "the biggest boo-boo in the old man's life," Max let the hottest property in comic-book history slip through his hands.

Fortunately, he was well-connected with Donenfeld, who was in the process of building a comic-book kingdom. Donenfeld had "Superman" and also a second popular caped hero, "Batman." Now, in partnership with Max, he would back a new line of comics built around other invincible heroes. This was the All-American line, which produced such crime-crushing greats as "The Flash," "Hawkman," "The Mighty Atom," and "Wonder Woman." The two men built up their lines and by 1943 the twenty magazines of Donenfeld and Gaines accounted for one-third of the 18 million comic books sold each month.

The two men worked independently. Donenfeld housed his Superman-DC group uptown in plush, carpeted offices, containing big desks and secretaries with good legs. Max, a shirtsleeves man, produced his All-American line out of a no-frills, pipe-rack office downtown on Lafayette Street.

Max considered himself a patriot, and one of his first adventure books was *All-American Comics*. One night

he came home and told the family "I've got this great lead feature starring a soldier, a sailor, and a marine, but I can't come up with names for them."

Bill piped up, "What's the name of the story?"

"Red, White and Blue," said Max.

"Why not call the heroes Red, Whitey, and Blooey?" offered Bill

Max winced slightly at the name Blooey, but, there being nothing better, followed Bill's suggestion. It was Bill's first contribution to the world of comics.

But all was not roses within the new partnership, especially after Donenfeld, in one of his typically impulsive gestures, gave his half of the All-American group to his accountant, Jack Liebowitz, and they didn't get along. Bill remembers that every afternoon his father would take a taxi to the uptown offices, where he, Liebowitz, and Donenfeld would

scream at each other for two hours. Something had to give and that something was Max's patience. In early 1945, he hurled out his ultimatum: "You buy me out or I'll buy you out." They bought him out.

Max demanded \$500,000, free and clear after taxes. He got it, after which he announced his retirement. Two weeks later, he was back in business, happy again to be his own boss and not having to report to any partner. It was not a successful re-entry. The uptown group had bought all his adventure titles and left him with a handful of rather quiet properties, bearing non-socko titles like *Picture Stories From The Bible*, *Picture Stories From American History*, *Tiny Tot Comics*, and *American Fables*.

Inside Max beat the heart of a teacher, and he called his new company Educational Comics. He took special pride in his Biblical stories, even though producing them brought no change to his blustering business methods. "I don't care how long it took Moses to cross the desert," he once screamed at an artist. "I want it

in three panels."

Max plugged away, pouring in \$100,000 of his own money to keep the company going. Despite the losing effort, he was living the good life.

(Continued on page 54)



THE MAD WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES PART II

(Continued from page 19)

He had bought a fine new home in White Plains, and the family spent its summers at the house on Lake Placid. Bill had survived his three years in the Army and, despite the fact that he would never amount to anything, was piling up almost a straight A average while studying to be a teacher at New York University. The only pressing family problem was Bill's marriage to Hazel, which was crumbling fast.

In mid-August, 1947, Bill made a painful phone call to his parents, vacationing at Lake Placid. Hazel had left him to get a divorce. Jessie became hysterical. "How could they do this to me?" she wailed. She appealed to Max, "Do something!" Max invited up old friends Sam and Helen Irwin to keep his wife company. The Irwins were good for Jessie and would help take her mind off Bill's divorce.

On the afternoon of August 20, Bill and his friend, Sy Koones, after running some errands, returned to Bill's apartment and were met by the landlord. Bill was told to call his Uncle Will in the Bronx.

"What's up Will?" Bill asked, on reaching his uncle.

"There's been an accident at the lake," Will said.

"Is it my mother?" Bill asked, assuring that she had attempted suicide because of his broken marriage.

"No, it's your father," Will said. "He's dead."



The accident had come with practically no warning. Elaine and a girlfriend had decided to swim across Lake Placid, and Max, Sam Irwin, and the Irwins' son, Billy, were in Max's Chris Craft, following the girls. Halfway across,

another boat came charging through the water and plowed into the front of the Gaines boat, instantly killing Max and Sam Irwin. Billy escaped unscathed, it is believed that in the brief moment before impact, Max grabbed the boy and threw him into the rear of the boat, thereby saving his life.

Koones drove Bill to the lake. Bill tried to make jokes on the way up, but arriving at the summer home he went to pieces. The next day he wandered off by himself. Elaine went out looking for him and found him in the boathouse, sobbing uncontrollably.

The funeral was held in White Plains and was well attended. Many of the mourners driving up from New York City were met near the parkway by a highway patrolman, who personally escorted them to the Gaines's house. The patrolman was the man whose son's hospital bills had been paid for by Max Gaines.

CHAPTER II

IT'S YOUR BUSINESS, BILL

Bill Gaines sat in his father's chair behind his father's desk and marveled at the parade of bosomy, leggy females that cavorted before his eyes. The luscious beauties interested him as did the young artist who had drawn them.

It was March, 1948, and Bill was into his seventh month as titular head of his father's business. He had been dead set against it, but his mother, on the advice of various people, had decided to keep Educational Comics going.

So he came down to the office to sit behind the desk, sign checks, and wonder what the hell he was doing there.

"It was remarkable that he had the confidence to walk in the door, considering that his father had treated him like the local cretin," says novelist William Woolfolk, who had



ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE ARAGON

observed the father-son relationship while packaging comics for Max.

Bill felt, or at least hoped, that his stint as so-called head of the firm would be temporary. He was, after all, completing his final year at New York University, after which he would begin his life's work as a teacher.

"How the hell can I run a business when I couldn't even make it as the old man's stockroom boy?" he asked his friend, Sy Koones.

"You can do it, you really can," Koones said over and over.

Bill wasn't so sure. The business was mopping along, \$100,000 in the red, turning out his father's weak line of kiddie comics. And if his father, who knew the business, had failed, what chance did Bill have? He didn't have the first idea of what a publisher, which he was now imper-

"How the hell can I run a business when I couldn't even make it as the old man's stockroom boy?"



sonating, was supposed to do. He spent his office hours playing gin rummy with his cousin, Buddy Rogin, and Rogin beat him every time. Then there was old curmudgeon Frank Lee, Max's long-time business manager, who welcomed

taking over, but you never would have known it," remembers Dorothy Woolfolk, then an EC freelance editor. "He was always curious, always asking questions, but never in the steamroller manner of his father. Gradually, he got to know his magazines, got to know what he wanted."

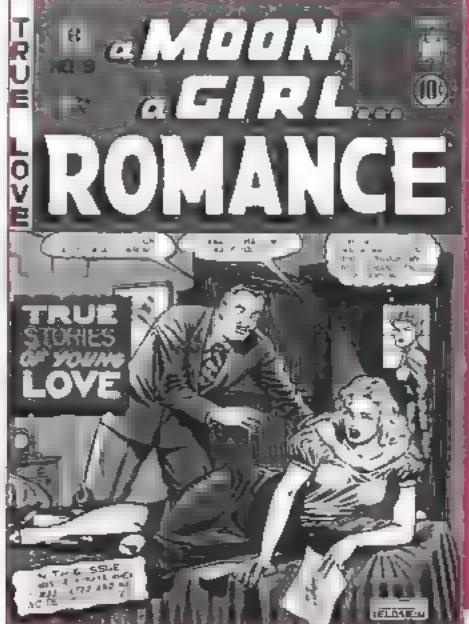
One thing he wanted was to make use of Feldstein's luscious females, and together he and Feldstein started *Modern Love*, a romance comic featuring such attractions as "Dime-a-Dance Hostess" and "I Had Two Husbands." Bill showed the first issue to Lee, who responded true to form.

"It's your business, Bill," he said, shaking his head and returning to his ledgers.

Modern Love was followed by *A Moon, A Girl...Romance* and then by *Saddle Romances*. Bill and Feldstein particularly enjoyed writing replies to the queries that filled the magazines' lovem pages. In "Advice from Adrienne,"

the advice was

partly Bill's, despite the fact that he knew next to nothing about romance. The Post Office required a deposit of two thousand dollars to obtain a second-class mailing permit for any new magazine. To counter this, a publisher would reword an old title and try to sneak it through on the original deposit. Thus, *Moon Girl And The Prince* (space adventure) became *Moon Girl* (more of the same), which became *Moon Girl Fights Crime* (space and crime), which became *A Moon, A Girl...Romance*



Gaines evolved the title *Moon Girl* into *Weird Fantasy* slowly to avoid paying the post office extra money.

Bill as one accepts the common cold — after a short spell it would hopefully go away. Worst of all was the recurring dream that disturbed Bill's sleep, a quasi-nightmare in which Max would appear and tell his son that he wanted his business back.

But now, as he looked at the array of busty beauties spread out before him, he was stirred into action. He chatted with the artist, whose name was Al Feldstein, about the possibilities of turning out a teen-age love magazine. The project never got off the ground, but Bill, in what seemed to him then a major decision, hired Feldstein to draw western and crime stories.

Until then, most of the decisions in the office were made by Sol Cohen, who had been Max's circulation manager, and Frank Lee. But Bill was feeling his way into the business. "He was

(love). When Bill tried to change this last title into *Weird Fantasy* (science fiction), it was all too much for the Post Office, which stopped the shenanigans and made EC pay a new deposit.

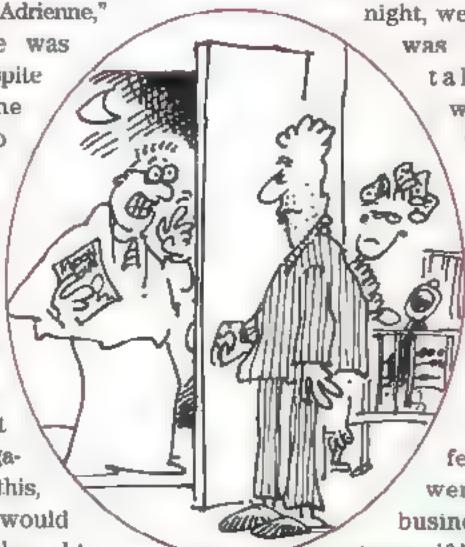
But he enjoyed working up new titles with Feldstein and with another up and coming artist, Johnny Craig, and by the end of 1949 was publishing six love, crime, and western comics, all of which were of his own making. But his father continued to invade his sleep and he required constant reassurance from Koones. Occasionally, when he was convinced some task was beyond him, he ran to his father's old editor, Sheldon Mayer.

One night Mayer was startled out of his slumber by the door bell ringing. He looked at the clock. It was 3 A.M. He wandered down to the front door, and there was Bill, unable to sleep and requiring advice about some office crisis.

The two talked through the night, well past dawn. It was one of many

talks they would have, with Mayer generally telling Bill that he couldn't become successful until he stopped regarding EC as a great toy.

"I got the feeling that Bill went into the business as a joke, to see if he could screw up things, change them for his private amusement, and still manage to make money doing it," Mayer remembers. "I suggested



that he see a psychiatrist, but it took me years to get him to do it."

Maybe Mayer's theory is right. Maybe Bill did have a lot of rebellion to get out of his system. Years earlier, when he worked as Max's editor, Mayer had set down a list of taboos to be observed to the letter

reader response was enthusiastic. The office reaction was less so. Frank Lee looked at the new stuff, shook his head, and said, "It's your business, Bill." Sol Cohen was convinced that EC was on a collision course with disaster. "The ship is sinking," he told Bill and resigned. Bill and Feldstein smiled. They were convinced they were on to something.

spectacular art that today is regarded by aficionados as the dawning of a new age in comic-book illustration. Gaines not only was building an empire, he was laying the foundation for what would become the most fanatic cult in the history of the industry.

He didn't know this at the time, of course, but he did know that he could smell success and that every-



by all of Max's writers and artists. Among them:

Never show anybody stabbed or shot.
Show no torture scenes.
Never show a hypodermic needle
Don't chop the limbs off anybody.
Never show a coffin,
especially with anybody in it.

Less than four years after taking over his father's business, Bill would have punctured every taboo on the list.

The name of the new game was horror. Bill and Feldstein were dabbling with a revolutionary kind of comic, designed to shake up readers with tales of terror and suspense. They had concocted three or four of these stories and inserted them as single features in their crime magazines. The

They were. The old titles were phased out and in early 1950 the first two magazines in a brand-new line made their premiere — *The Crypt of Terror* and *The Vault of Horror*. These were the eerie vanguard of what was being promoted as "Entertaining Comics — A New trend in Comic Books" ("Educational Comics" seemed inappropriate), and they became successful in about as short a time as a line of new comics can. Even the wholesalers, who at first took a dim view of such sensational fare, showed grudging interest as they saw the EC sales figures zoom.

Other new titles emerged *The Haunt of Fear*, *Shock SuspenStories*, *Crime SuspenStories*, *Weird Science*, and *Weird Fantasy* — and each seethed with wild, twisting tales brought to life by

Gaines's and Feldstein's 1950s horror titles began a new (and some would say disturbing) trend in comic books.

one in the office was bursting with enthusiasm — well, almost everyone. There was still Frank Lee. Gaines took infinite pains to avoid discussing anything new with him. Not so Feldstein, who could not control his fervor. Every time he finished a cover, he would show it to Lee and ask, "How do you like it?" and every time Lee would answer, "I don't like it."

But horror had taken hold. The new magazines brought in so much money that within a year EC's financial problems were wiped out. A short time later, Gaines dreamt again of his father, who extended his hand and said, "You're doing a great job."

And that particular problem was wiped out, too.



CHAPTER 5

YOU SHARPEN THE PENCILS, THE PENCILS SHARPEN YOUR HEAD

Gaines has a compulsion for neatness and orderliness that is unworldly. This crotchet led to the memorable tale, "Neat Job," in which a wife is driven to desperate ends by her excessively tidy husband. Gaines puckishly had Feldstein name the leading characters Arthur and Eleanor, which happened to be the names of old chum Dreeben and his bride. The following excerpts reveal how villains often were treated in EC's horror tales:

Arthur comes home from work and immediately inspects his wardrobe.

ARTHUR: Eleanor, the laundry came back today, didn't it?

ELEANOR: Yes, Arthur.

ARTHUR: How many times have I told you, no, a few go or the last folded in had to go?

ELEANOR: Yes, Arthur.

Arthur checks the state of the kitchen.

ARTHUR: Eleanor, you've sped a car off the road, and you don't check it off the list. And you don't put it in the empty place with one from the back!

ELEANOR: I forgive Arthur.

ARTHUR: Oh, forget? That's no excuse! You mustn't forget! Don't let it happen again!

ELEANOR: Yes, Arthur.

The denouement occurs when Arthur finds that Eleanor has dropped one of the many jars of nails that he has arranged in precise order in his basement workshop.

ARTHUR: You wanted to hang a picture, you came down for a nail, eh? Only you broke a jar, eh? Sloppy...sloppy Eleanor... Can't you? Can't you?

Eleanor can take it no longer. "I backed away and my hand closed on something, a handle of one of Arthur's tools! I pulled it from its place as everything went black!"

In the final panels, she confesses to two detectives.

ELEANOR: I remember wanting to show him I could be neat! I wanted it to be a neat job! I cleaned up everything when I finished!

DETECTIVE: Yeah, lady, you certainly did a neat job!

In the jars the reader sees the result of Eleanor's handiwork. Each is labeled with the particular part of Arthur's body it contains—"Kneecaps(2); " "Pancreas(1); " "Toes(10); " "Heart(1); " "Teeth(32)." And so on.

The horror schedule was exhausting. Each day a complete script had to be written and gotten ready for one of the freelance artists. The labor began around 9:30 in the morning, with Gaines tossing out springboards for plots to Feldstein. Gaines read furiously in those days, searching for any idea, any gimmick that might turn Feldstein on.

"Al and I would sit there," he recalls, "and I'd try to sell him on a springboard. After he had rejected the first thirty-three on general principles, he might show a little interest in number thirty-four. Then I'd give him the hard sell and he'd run into the next room and start breaking down the plot into story form. He'd normally write a story in three hours, but during those three hours I'd have a nervous stomach, wondering if Al was going to come in screaming, 'I can't write that G**damn plot!' When that happened, it would be early afternoon, and we'd have to start all over again because we simply had to have a complete story by five o'clock."

Most of the stories were terror-tinted vignettes of foul play and retribution. In a tale titled, appropriately, "Foul Play," a baseball player murders an opponent through the use of poisoned spikes. Revenge takes place when the victim's teammates dismember the villain and play an eerie midnight ballgame, using his limbs as bats and his vital organs as bases. In another story, "Taint the



ILLUSTRATION BY SERGIO ARAGONES

Meat...It's the Humanity," a butcher is chopped into small pieces by his wife after the tainted horsemeat he'd been selling kills their son.

Gaines often based plots on his own obsessions and phobias. His deep-seated distrust of women led to what he called the Don't-Ever-Trust-Your-Wife-As-Far-As-You-Can Throw-Her premise. ("We got a lot of mileage out of scheming wives and vengeful husbands"). His belief that man is inherently evil and animals are inherently good also proved a good source ("man meets animal, man mistreats animal, animal takes revenge on man"). His hatred of vivisection led to a story called "The Probers," in which a scientist who takes fiendish delight in cutting up guinea pigs is captured by creatures from another planet, who put him in a cage and, yes, cut him up.

Gaines looked for springboards everywhere. After watching live lobsters being broiled, he plotted "Half-Baked," in which a sadist who enjoys cooking lobsters end up getting split down the middle and broiled alive.

This was formula, of course, but the readers ate it up. Youngsters began sending in plots. One canny youth suggested a story in which a man with a mania for sharpening pencils winds up with his head being sharpened to a point. "We can't use it," Gaines told Feldstein. "but the kid has the right formula you



sharpen the pencils, the pencils sharpen your head."

As the months flew by, Gaines found it harder and harder to come up with the appropriate plots, especially for his science fiction comics. He and Feldstein turned to a new source — the short stories of Ray Bradbury. Seeing his stories adapted into comic form, Bradbury, who had not been consulted, wrote Gaines, "You have inadvertently omitted my royalty on the two stories of mine you used in a recent issue." However, he was delighted with Feldstein's treatment and allowed EC to use his stories in return for a modest royalty. As Gaines explains it, "We swiped his stories and he caught us."

late in the game, Gaines appealed in *Writer's Digest* for horror plots. The plea did not bring in many usable springboards, but it did sum up Gaines's ideas as to what a proper tale of terror should be:

We have no ghosts, devils, ghouls and zombies. If

we have

we have to triumph.

Essential as they were, the plots and scripts played second fiddle to the artwork — at least to the eyes of many EC fans. Feldstein, unlike most comic-book editors of the day, encouraged the artists to develop individual styles. Gaines made stars out of his illustrators, spotlighting them in full-page biographies in various issues. Virtually unknown when they came to EC, they

emerged as celebrities, their youthful admirers deluging them with fan mail and requests for auto-

graphs. A special favorite was Graham Ingels, whose cadaverous inkings endeared him to the hearts of the readers, and who signed his work with the nickname, "Ghastly." More than anyone, Ingels personifies the horror era, partly because of his ghoulish craft, partly because he vanished in the late 1950's. At the 1972 EC Fan Addict Convention, several devotees sported large buttons reading "Ghastly Lives!" During the conclave, Gaines revealed that Ingels had been traced to Florida, but that "Ghastly" preferred not to disclose the exact location. Comic historian Bhor Stewart has likened Ingels to Ambrose Bierce: "He simply disappeared, whereabouts unknown, and has not been found yet."



A month or so before the horror period began, a thin, owl-faced artist presented himself in Gaines's office. He was Harvey Kurtzman and he thought that Educational Comics, which was Gaines's

listing in the Yellow Pages, was an outfit where he might draw educational comics. Gaines steered Kurtzman to an uncle, David Gaines, who occasionally brought in commercial jobs for EC to produce. Yes, David Gaines did have need of an artist for an educational pamphlet, and so it happened that Harvey Kurtzman, who would later begin MAD, got his first EC job illustrating *Lucky Luke*, a comic book about venereal disease.

Kurtzman later joined Gaines's stable of horror artists, then edited and wrote two war comics, *Frontline Combat* and *Two-Fisted Tales* during the years of the Korean War.

Editor Al Feldstein would write a story a day for Gaines's horror comics.



The new entries brought EC's number of New Trend titles to nine, with seven produced by Feldstein and two by

Kurtzman.

The working methods of the two young men differed, to say the least. Feldstein was a dynamo, writing a story a day for more than four years, never missing a deadline, churning out more material than any editor-writer in the business. His horror and suspense magazines became EC's perennial money makers. The stories, if not always inspired, were slick and highly readable. His science fiction comics, on the other hand, rarely made a profit. Gaines kept them going because "everyone at EC loved them," especially Feldstein, who poured the cream of his talent into them.

Kurtzman played tortoise to Feldstein's hare, but at EC slow and steady did not win the race. He couldn't stand the distraction of an office, so he worked out of his home, where he plotted each panel of his war comics with painstaking precision. He buried himself in research. If he were recreating, say, the Battle of Gettysburg, every uniform, every rifle, sometimes every hillock had to look authentic. In a story on the Korean War, Kurtzman had the native troops speak Korean, double-checking the dialogue with an official at the Korean Consulate to make sure that the speech was accurate.

"Harvey knew the research rooms at the New York Public Library inside out," recalls Jerry DeFuccio, who served as Kurtzman's legman. While writing



the story, "The Silent Service," Kurtzman sent DeFuccio to the United States submarine base in New London, Connecticut. "I want you to bring back the scream of the klaxon, the sound of the diving alarm, the chime of the dinner bell," Kurtzman ordered, "and let me know when you get there." De Fuccio not only visited the base, he went down in a submarine, after which he wired Kurtzman, "MANY BRAVE HEARTS ARE BURIED IN THE DEEP. GLUB GLUB."

Kurtzman himself went up in a Grumman seaplane, not finding out until he was airborne and fitted out with a parachute that the plane was making a test flight. When he wrote a story on Army medics, he procured an official medical kit and told artist Jack Davis to reproduce it faithfully. "No, Jack," Kurtzman complained when he was brought the artwork, "the gauze pad goes to the right of the sulpha."

For all his nit-picking, Kurtzman turned out marvelous material, probably the best war comics ever

to see print. Unlike other combat books, his were semi-documentaries, unadorned with false sentiment and propaganda and ringing with authenticity. Kurtzman's wars

some, outlandish terror.

There was Marie Severin, Gaines's colorist, and a very moral Catholic, who made her feelings known by coloring dark blue any

Gaines made stars out of his illustrators, spotlighting them in full-page biographies in various issues.

were not events to be romanticized.

"I became obsessed with the idea of communicating real events," he recalls. "When I wrote about Iwo Jima, I avoided the usual glamorous stuff of the big, good-looking G.I. beating up the ugly little yellow man."



Recently, Gaines was asked which he enjoyed more — the horror years or the MAD years. His response was immediate: the horror years were the most rewarding period in his life. For one thing, he was proving he could make money doing something he liked. For another, he was getting his initial glimpse of the zany world of the creative artist.

There was Wally Wood, outwardly a quiet chap, who liked to sneak the unexpected into his panels, such as making an arch-criminal look like Pope Pius XII and a victimized hero resemble Stalin.

There was Jack Davis, a modest country boy from Georgia who could be sold the Brooklyn Bridge, yet amazed the EC crew with his matchless scenes of grie-

panel she thought was in bad taste. Feldstein has called her "the conscience of EC." Nevertheless, it was Marie who stretched out Gaines on a stockroom table and created his "death mask" out of plaster of paris. Her dream was to see the office walls lined with the masks of the horror comics crew.

There was Feldstein, who couldn't pass up a bargain. Gaines had inherited from his father a diamond



Jerry DeFuccio, left, with Lewy Brenner. As Harvey Kurtzman's researcher, DeFuccio once submerged in a Navy sub.

ring worth \$3,500. He wore it always. One day he paid a jeweler thirty-five dollars to make an exact duplicate out of zircon. Gaines began to mistreat the phony ring, throwing it across the room and kicking it. Feldstein was shocked. After all, the ring was worth \$3,500. In a final fit, Gaines



THANKS FOR YOUR NOTE — THE E.C. GANG



Over the years, fans who wrote to EC Comics received a souvenir print. This one is by Bill Elder.

pulled the ring off his finger and shouted, "I'm sick of wearing this lousy thing! I'll sell it for a hundred dollars." "Sold!" said Feldstein, faster than a speeding bullet. Gaines didn't have the heart to take the money.

There was Kurtzman, who wrote about war the way it was but could not overcome his own timidity. Gaines remembers waiting an hour for Kurtzman to arrive at the office for an important meeting. Finally, Gaines phoned him.

"Harvey, where are you?"

"I'm home," Kurtzman said.

"What happened?" Gaines asked.

"I drove down and parked near the office, and when I got out of the car a gang of children attacked me, so I got back in my car and drove home."

And there was Will Elder, he of the

macabre whimsy, who once sent his wife a valentine on which was attached the heart of a chicken with an arrow through it. Elder's talents developed early. When he was ten, he cut out small paper figures of a woman being chased by a man wielding a huge knife. He placed the fig-

day, the students and teacher went to an adjoining room to collect their coats. There they found Elder, his face whitened with chalk dust, hanging from a coat hook. A year or so later, Elder ripped his clothes, smeared himself with red paint and walked into

There was Kurtzman, who wrote about war the way it was but could not overcome his own timidity.

ures on the turntable of a phonograph, then projected the revolving figures onto the window shade of his living room. While passersby gawked at the scene, Elder screamed "Help! Help!" in a high voice from inside the house.

Elder was irrepressible. One day in school he failed to appear for a class taught by an especially nervous teacher. At the end of the

his house, where his mother was entertaining. The sight upset his mother to the point of calling an ambulance. This time Elder had gone too far. He was too frightened to reveal his hoax and allowed himself to be rushed to a hospital. The doctor on emergency duty examined him and, of course, found nothing wrong. It was fortu-

(Continued on page 77)



THE MAD WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES PART II

(Continued from page 60)

nate, Elder has said, that the man was not a psychiatrist.

Elder attended high school with Bess Myerson, who knew him as Wolf, his real first name, which he used until he entered the Army. In 1945, shortly after being discharged, Elder and two Army buddies were passing by Loew's State Theatre on Broadway. Making a personal appearance was Miss Myerson, who had recently been named Miss America. Elder bet his chums a sizable amount of money that on seeing her, Miss Myerson would throw her arms around him. His buddies took the bet, whereupon Elder sent word, via the stage door attendant, that Wolf Elder would like to see Miss America. Moments later, Miss Myerson appeared, screamed "Wolfie!" and hugged her schoolmate. Elder's buddies, open-



Bill Gaines, Al Feldstein and their favorite comics.

mouthing, paid up.

And, of course there was Gaines, who was everyone's favorite audience because he

laughed out loud and long at any nonsense that was perpetrated. One morning, Feldstein and Johnny Craig decided to give Gaines a blazing welcome. The idea was to spread flammable rubber cement thinner on the floor of Feldstein's office, summon Gaines, then ignite the liquid as he entered. It went according to plan, except that when Gaines walked into the inferno he slipped on the stuff and fell to the floor. Feldstein, terrified, jumped on Gaines and beat out the flames. Gaines, ever so slightly singed, was hysterical with laughter.

He was not the normal breed of boss. Among other unorthodoxies, he dressed sloppily and went for

days without shaving. One day the building's elevator operator, whose name was Cesar, took out his billfold and said, "Here's a dollar. Get yourself a shave." Gaines snatched the dollar and kept it, which bothered Cesar, who had not expected Gaines to take the offer seriously. From then on, Gaines scrupulously avoided Cesar, sometimes even walking — yes, walking — up and down the seven flights to avoid a confrontation. Cesar became frantic. He wanted his dollar back. Gaines let the intrigue go on for a month, then one morning strolled casually into Cesar's elevator and returned the dollar.

For all his sloppiness and practical jokes, Gaines projected an employer's image. Walter Kast's kid brother Paul, whom Gaines employed briefly as a stockroom boy, was amazed to come into the office and behold this "teacher-type of a man" running things. "He appeared easygoing, but there was no doubt that he was the leader," Kast recalls. "It's incredible how he



slid into his new role."

Tranquility reigned. Gaines's sales figures showed that he had up to half a million readers per issue, and he was happy. Feldstein, who was blasting out seven magazines and getting a good fee for each, also was happy. The artists

lampooned what he knew best — the comics themselves. He became excited about the idea and told Gaines, who liked it but didn't expect to make any money from it. The first issue of the new magazine came out in the summer of 1952. During the planning

"Smilin' Melvin" — Kurtzman had a thing about the name Melvin — and an onslaught on Walt Disney's most revered creation, titled "Mickey Rodent."

Kurtzman hung in with his war comics, but was overwhelmed by his one great enemy — time. He simply couldn't meet the deadlines. Besides, the Korean War had ended and sales of the books were slipping. Taps sounded for *Frontline Combat* in 1953 and for *Two Fisted Tales* a year later.

MAD, however, was taking off like a skyrocket, building up a loyal, sometimes fanatical, following. Among its converts was Lyle Stuart, a controversial young publisher, whose tabloid, *Expose*, assailed sacrosanct areas of the American establishment. Stuart wrote a letter praising MAD and requesting a subscription. Gaines wrote back that he was a charter subscriber and zealous admirer of Stuart's *Expose* and enclosed a foot-high parcel containing all of EC's magazines. A week later, Gaines bought shares of *Expose* stock, which kept Stuart from going out of business.

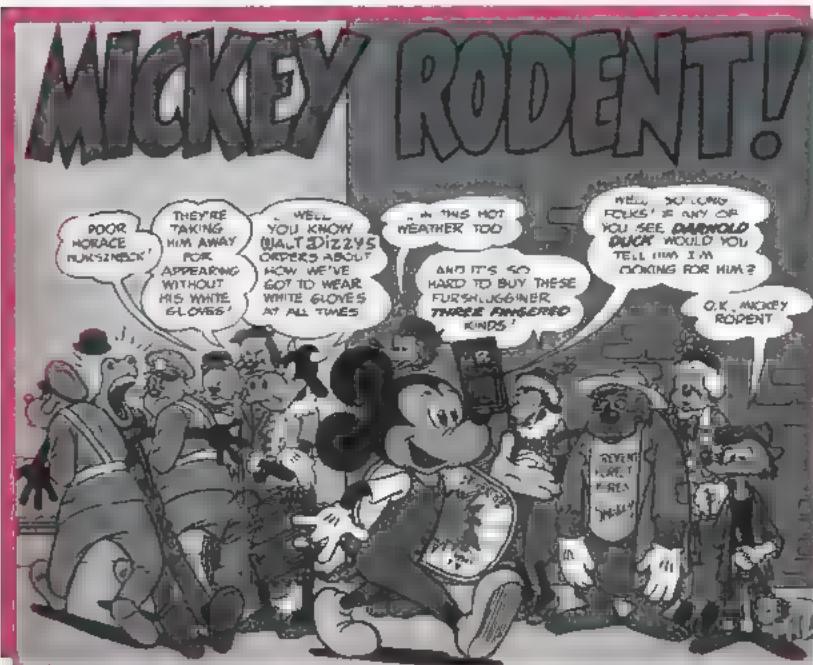
A friendship developed. Gaines was impressed by Stuart's independence. He couldn't understand how a man on the brink of poverty could appear so confident. Stuart, then as now, thought that Gaines was one of the last of the world's "origins."

Stuart became EC's business manager after Frank Lee retired in 1953. Gaines would soon find that Stuart was a helpful man to have around. The days of the horror comics were numbered. A witch-hunt was afoot in the land, and Gaines's name was on the list.

CHAPTER 6

BILL! BILL!

Throughout the horror period, Gaines lived with his mother, Jessie



were working regularly and were paid on delivery of a job, and they were happy, too. Well, then, was everybody happy? No, Kurtzman was not happy. He was producing two successful war comics and felt that his income should be closer to Feldstein's. Gaines pointed out that Feldstein was turning out seven books to Kurtzman's two, then put forth a proposition.

"I'll tell you what, Harvey. I know you're a humorist. Why don't you put out a humor magazine. Just slip it in between your two war books and your income will go up fifty percent."

Kurtzman thought it over and decided that the kind of humor magazine for him to do would be one that

stages, it was referred to as EC's Mad Mag. This title was eventually shortened to MAD.

There had never been anything quite like it, this furshlugginer MAD. Scripted by Kurtzman and illustrated by EC veterans Will Elder, Wally Wood, Jack Davis, and John Severin, the new magazine began by parodying those comics that Kurtzman liked least — Gaines's horror and suspense stories. Later, MAD assaulted other venerated institutions of comedom. "Archie," the fun-loving teenager, emerged as "Starchie," a zippgun-carrying juvenile delinquent. "Superduperman" (guess who) spent eight pages battling his rival super-hero, Captain Marbles (guess who again). Other efforts included "Little Orphan Melvin." "Melvin of the Apes," and



was happy having her son around because fighting with him brought back memories of her marriage to Max.

"We were very fond of each other, but we couldn't stand each other," says Gaines.

"There was a healthy mutual respect," recalls Sy Koones.

"They maintained a high level of bickering banter," offers Paul Kast.

Jessie Gaines was a very proper lady and she was appalled by many aspects of her son's behavior. But Gaines, fortified perhaps by the flush of success, was not easily domineered, as can be evidenced in these tender mother-son exchanges:

JESSIE: Why are you driving so fast?

BILL: Because I want to splatter my body all over the road.

JESSIE: Why do you smoke so much?

BILL: Because I want to get lung cancer.

JESSIE: Why don't you lose weight?

BILL: Because some day they may give an award for Biggest Slob and I want to win it.

One night Gaines dined with the Feldsteins. The meal was marred by a family quarrel, whereupon Gaines, with infinite wisdom, lectured the

Feldsteins that it was bad manners to argue in front of a guest. A few weeks later, the Feldsteins dined with Bill and Jessie, who launched into a shouting match that made the Feldsteins' tiff seem like a tea party. The Feldsteins were outraged. How dare Bill lecture them when he behaved just as badly! Bill replied that quarreling with one's mother was an entirely different matter than quarreling with one's wife, a piece of logic that he did not believe for one minute.

Jessie and Bill lived for a time in Brooklyn, then, after the horror comics caught on, moved into a plush high rise in Manhattan. She was proud, perhaps a bit stunned, to see her son a success in business,

but her proper Pennsylvania soul recoiled at his behavior in public.

Bill was and is a gutsy driver. One afternoon, accompanied by Jessie and Walter Kast, he sped down Manhattan's West Side highway at seventy

miles an hour. Another motorist passed Bill and cut him off. Bill accelerated to eighty and cut him off. The other motorist cut off Bill again, this time spitting on Bill's car while passing. Both cars zoomed through the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel. At the toll-booth, Bill saw the other motorist talking to a cop and pointing toward Bill's car. Bill leaped out, raced up to the cop, and screamed, "The son of a bitch spit on my car!"

From the back seat came Jessie's mortified shriek — "BILL! BILL!"

Around the same period, Bill, again accompanied by Kast and Jessie, was involved in a minor collision in Queens. While Bill discussed the accident with the other driver, a woman bystander came over to Kast and yelled, "I saw the whole thing!" Why don't you Communists go back where you came from! Bill dashed back to his car and loudly called the woman every four-letter word he could think of.

From the back seat came Jessie's anguished scream of distress — "BILL! BILL!"

It may be argued with some degree of success that Bill was not the easiest kind of son to understand.

"He was a very different kind of boy," says his sister Elaine. "Sometimes I think he worked at being different."

He showed his talents early. At the age of seven, he dismayed the faculty at Berkeley Institute, a private school, by blowing itching and sneezing powder on his classmates. At Berkeley, students were required to print their lessons.

Bill wrote his in script. In the fifth grade, he transferred to a public school where stu-

ILLUSTRATION BY SERGIO FRANCIS



Bill knew how to get to his mother. One weekend they stopped for lunch at a roadside restaurant. On leaving, Jessie took a roll for her canary, which was in a cage in the car. She felt it necessary to explain this to the waitress.

"I TALKED TO OUR CAR, TRY TO MEET

Bill entered the conversation.

What canary?" she asked.

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dents were required to write in script. Not Bill, who penned his lessons in print.

He liked using his mind almost anywhere but in the classroom. He spent one summer studying hieroglyphics at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He became a proficient photographer and set up his own darkroom. He learned how to read Braille, and he mastered enough sleight-of-hand to become a practiced amateur magician. He went his own way. Other lads might say their prayers, Bill gave God some thought, decided it was illogical for Him to exist, and at the age of twelve became an atheist. Gaines's refusal to be a believer has persisted to this day. Whenever he wants to convey sincerity, he prefaces it by saying, "I swear on my honor as an atheist..."

Bill and his teenage friends were an odd lot — loners all yet liking each other's company. One Saturday, Bill and Walter Kast decided to see the show at Radio City Music Hall. They asked George Rabin if he wanted to come along. George, as was occasionally his way, wouldn't answer. Bill and Walter set off for the subway. George followed a block behind them. Bill and Walter boarded the subway. So did George, but in another car. Bill and Walter entered the theatre and took their seats. George sat in the row behind them. Throughout the movie, George kept hitting Bill and Walter on the back of the head. Bill and Walter would make no response. The movie ended, the lights came on for the stage show, and Bill wheeled around and hit George in the face. Only it wasn't George. He had

moved a few seats over and Bill had struck a woman. Havoc ensued, with Bill almost being thrown out of the theatre.

Bill and his teenage friends were an odd lot — loners all yet liking each other's company.

Bill attended James Madison High School, where he piled up an undistinguished scholastic record. Years later, well into his career as the publisher of MAD, he received a letter from a woman, who wondered if he were the same William Gaines who attended James Madison High School in the late 1930's. "It is too far back to remember very much," she wrote, "but I do recall his coming to a party at our home armed with all sorts of 'gadgets,' such as ersatz ink blobs for placing on one's finest rug, and spending a good part of the evening in the kitchen drinking vinegar with my mother." Yes, it was the

same William Gaines, as if there could be two of them.

Somehow, Bill scored 100 in the New York State Regents Examination in chemistry, which made him believe that he was destined to be a chemist. He enrolled in

the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, a college historically noted for its high attrition rate. Bill contributed to the tradition by flunking out in his third year. It did not help that chum Arthur Dreeben was a classmate. They engaged in chalk fights in the classrooms. They fought duels with slide rules in the hallways. They embarked on strange rituals, such as eating the exact same lunch for months on end. As freshmen, they became the first students in many years to be put on probation for refusing to attend gym class. By the time they were juniors, they were being disciplined for any disturbance in school, no matter if they were nowhere near the scene.

After he flunked out of Brooklyn Poly, Bill left the house each morning as if he were going to class. This was to prevent Max from learning of his son's disgrace. Jessie prayed that Max would not find out. Her prayers were answered when Bill announced that he had successfully prevailed on his draft board to accept him for military service and that he would have to "drop out of school." This was now 1942, and the country was at war. Bill had tried to enlist in the Army, Navy, and Coast Guard, but was turned down because of his asthma and poor vision. He was finally accepted for limited service by



BILL DOES HIS PART TO PROTECT AMERICA (AND PUT ON SOME WEIGHT) DURING WWII.



the Army on the condition that he do no fighting.

Bill was glad to get away from home, even though it meant giving up his nighttime job as air raid warden. Not that he spent much time scanning the skies for Nazi bombers. As a warden, he was given a large water-filled fire extinguisher, and he and George Rabin spent many thrilling evenings driving the streets of Brooklyn, drenching people riding in streetcars and dousing couples necking in parked cars.

"George had uncanny aim," Bill recalls. "He could arch a shot perfectly from a moving car and hit a pedestrian smack in the face at thirty feet."

Bill was assigned to the Army Air Corps. He underwent only eighteen days of basic training, which was fortunate, since he was unable to lift a rifle to shoot it. He had read somewhere that certain people suffered from pains called adhesions. Whenever he was ordered to march or run, he would grip his side and complain of his adhesions. The strategy worked.

Bill wound up as a base photographer (he had been turned down on his first choice, to go to cook and bakers school), and he had, what servicemen call, "a good deal." He worked out of a photo lab, didn't have to stand inspections, and could go four or five days without shaving.

This was at De Ridder Army Air Corps Base, Louisiana, where Bill was assigned to take pictures of training planes that crashed. His photographs were excellent, but his ability to understand orders left

something to be desired. One morning he was being flown to the sight of a crash. The pilot told him, "Don't pick up your parachute by the handle." Bill nodded and picked up the parachute by the handle, which caused it

BILL WITH HIS FIRST WIFE AND SECOND COUSIN, HAZEL (HIM *Deliverance* THEM HERE).

to open inside the plane. The pilot shrugged, "If the plane should develop trouble and we have to bail out, you can forget about joining us."

In early 1945, around the time of the Battle of the Bulge, the Army was rounding up thousands of men in stateside bases and shipping them

have asthma, but it was hiding. He resigned himself to being shipped to the battlefield. At the eleventh hour, he took a final physical. This time his asthma showed itself in all its majesty, and Bill was allowed to stay in the States. He figured out what had happened. During the first

physical, his fear at going overseas got his adrenaline going, which cleared his lungs. By the time of the final physical, he was resigned to his fate and his adrenaline flow had subsided, creating, he recalls, "the most beautiful display of wheezing and gasping you've ever heard."



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT ADAMS

to the front in Europe as infantrymen. Everyone was being taken, even unshaven Air Corps photographers on limited service.

Bill counted on his asthma to exempt him. He was given a physical, but his chest was clear as a bell. Bill couldn't understand it. He did



Bill was girl-shy. His sister Elaine can't remember him having a date in high school. He thought he might improve his social life when he joined a fraternity at Brooklyn Poly, but his Phi Alpha brothers were of little help. Neither were his old chums. One night, he and Rabin were driving through Brooklyn, dousing pedestrians with Bill's fire extinguisher. Two girls approached the car. They smiled invitingly. Rabin drenched them.

The first girl Bill dated with any momentum was his second cousin, Hazel Grieb, who lived in Pennsylvania.



Much of the momentum was supplied by Jessie, who wanted a wedding. Any reservations the couple had about marriage were neutralized by Jessie's matchmaking. Bill and Hazel were married in 1944 and lived off-post during Bill's last year in service.

Bill wound up his three years, four months, and twenty days in the Air Corps as a private first class. He and Hazel returned to New

York, where Hazel got a job working for Max. Bill enrolled again at Brooklyn Poly — returning war veterans were being treated with compassion — but it was hopeless, so he transferred to New York University to become a teacher.

After his divorce from Hazel and his father's death, Bill lived with his mother for eight years. It was during this period that he cultivated his compulsion for neatness. Max Gaines had often preached the maxim, "A place for everything and everything in its place." Bill Gaines applied the rule to his own life with the efficiency of a poorly dressed Prussian. Then as today he would come home from the EC offices and embark on a thirty-minute inspection. He would check each telephone to make sure it was in its prescribed location. He would make a tour of each closet, counting every towel and sheet. He would open the medicine chest and check off each bottle, noting the number of pills or level of liquid therein.

He would scrutinize his personal

effects. Were his socks identically rolled and stacked symmetrically in the drawer? Were his cigarette lighters — one for each day of the week — lined up on his dresser in proper order? Had the maid placed the most recently laundered handker-

completed an appointed task. Every so often, when Gaines was out of the office, Paul Kast would embellish the list with a spurious entry, such as "Button fly." At the end of the day, Gaines would run his fingers down the list, then explode, "What son of a

bitch wrote 'Button fly' on my list?"

He would stay in the office until everyone else

had left, then go from desk to desk, dumping ashtrays and tidying up. He continued this practice until 1954, when art director John Putnam brought a slovenliness to EC that not even Gaines could control. "When Putnam came to work for me, I knew I'd met my match," he says.

Gaines bought a blue Chrysler. He kept a pocket ledger, noting every penny spent on gas, tolls, repair, and upkeep. When he traded in the car three years later, he was able to calculate exactly what it had cost him per mile to drive during his

Well into the horror days, Gaines still viewed the opposite sex with the confidence of a stuttering teenager.

chiefs beneath the ones already in the drawer, so that they could be used in rotation?

He had certain months for buying certain wearables — shoes in October, shirts in May. His ties — he wore them more often in those days — had to add up to units of three, six, or twelve. "Christmas would kill him," recalls Walter Kast's wife, Ruby, who worked at EC during the horror days.

In the office, he made exact measurements so that his blotter was equidistant from all four edges of his desk. He began to keep precise lists of things to do each day, checking off each item as he

In Kurtzman's MAD, everyone from Alfred E. Neuman on down was eventually referred to as Melvin.

period of ownership.

His passion for unspoiled orderliness spilled over into his social life. One night a date began to throw up in his car. He pulled over and pushed the unlucky girl out the door, causing her to land face down in a snowdrift. The measure was necessary to preserve the pristine condition of the car's interior.

Well into the horror days, Gaines still viewed the opposite sex with the confidence of a stuttering teenager. One day he and Sy Koones had the opportunity to pick up two girls at the beach.

"What do I say? What do I do?" Gaines asked.

"Just smile," Koones said.

Gaines spent the afternoon walking around with his face stretched in an inane grin.

His bachelorhood lasted until 1955, when he married his second wife, Nancy. They had met three years earlier when Nancy came to work in EC's subscription department. Friends wondered if they would ever set a date. That they finally did was due to the intervention of an almost total stranger.

In the fall of 1954, Gaines and

exchanged the usual insurance data with the driver of the other car, whose name was Gene Zahn. About a year later, two blocks from the gas station, Gaines pulled up to a newspaper stand. After buying his paper, he returned to his car, backed out a few feet and was struck by a car rounding the corner. No one was hurt, and Gaines exchanged the usual insurance data with the driver of the other car, whose name was Gene Zahn.

"Didn't we have an accident a year ago?" Gaines asked.

"I believe we did," answered Zahn, giving a polite nod to Nancy, whom he remembered from the previous run-in. "Say, don't you think it's time you two got married?"

Gaines thought it over and decided that the point was well-taken. Within a month, he and Nancy were married.

The problem was where. Gaines, among his other phobias, has always had a great fear of having blood taken out of him. If the couple were married in New York, he would have to undergo a Wasserman blood test.

The prospect was intolerable. He therefore talked Nancy into getting married in Maryland, where a Wasserman wasn't required. After driving there, however, they discovered that Maryland employed no justices of the peace; there were only religious cere-



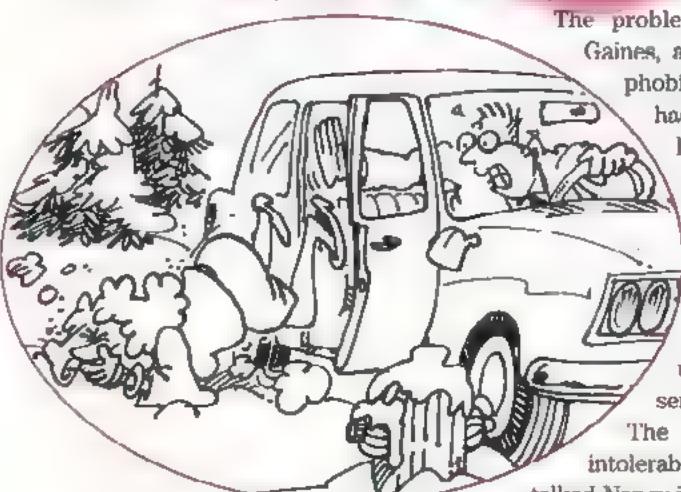
BILL WITH SECOND WIFE NANCY AND THEIR CHILDREN (L-R), CATHY, WENDY AND CHRIS.

monies. Gaines, an atheist, couldn't stand the thought of that, either. He and Nancy drove back to New York, where Gaines tried to talk his doctor into putting him to sleep so he wouldn't have to watch the blood being taken out of him. The doctor refused. Gaines gritted his teeth, shut his eyes, had his Wasserman, and was married.

Jessie Gaines wept after the wedding, her tears a mixture of joy and despair. She was gaining a daughter, but she was losing an adversary.

COMING UP NEXT

The axe falls on EC's horror line. Harvey Kurtzman rides a wave of success with the early comic book MAD, then turns it into a slick. Gaines and Kurtzman suffer a bitter falling out. Al Feldstein takes over as editor. MAD (Cheap!) enters its glory years, and we meet the artists and writers present at the creation.



Nancy were turning into a gas station on West 96th Street in Manhattan. As they made their turn, a car came down the street and barreled into them. No one was hurt, and Gaines



Many of our readers consider Frank Jacobs' *The Mad World of William M. Gaines* to be the definitive narrative of Bill Gaines' life and his E.C. empire. Scarce and long out of print, the book chronicles the Gaines era through 1972.

To help launch the new MAD XI series, we're serializing this book over six consecutive XI issues.



THE **MAD** WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES Part III

BY FRANK JACOBS

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• THE STORY SO FAR

We've profiled the personalities and work habits of Gaines and his in-house staffers. E.C. has been transformed, with horror and crime comics replacing the tamer titles Gaines inherited after his father's death. We've sat in plot sessions with Gaines and Al Feldstein. And we've looked at Gaines' stormy relationship with his father, his unique rapport with his mother and his two marriages.

CHAPTER 7

THE AX FALLS

"If you keep your horror comics going," predicted good friend William Woolfolk, "you're going to bring down the whole industry. I hate censorship, but even I get a little uneasy when I read a comic in which a man eats the corpse of his fiancée."

Gaines acknowledged that his books occasionally might appear to overstep the boundaries of good taste, but he couldn't see getting worked up over it. He knew his horror empire wouldn't last forever. Eventually, he figured, the fad would exhaust itself and die a natural, unbloody death. He, his staff, and his bank account had enjoyed three fat years, and he felt that the sheer momentum of his success would carry him through at least a year or two more. True, there were now more than one hundred imitations of his horror and suspense books glutting the newsstands. True, the New York Legislature annually tried to push through a bill banning these kinds of comics. But his magazines were holding their own, and Governor

Thomas E. Dewey had vetoed every anticomics bill that crossed his desk.

What Gaines didn't count on was the temper of the times. This was 1953, the heart of the McCarthy era, and the country was in a repressive mood. Each month, a few more letters of disapproval arrived from outraged parents or American Legion posts. Now and then a church magazine or a P.T.A. group would beat the drum for a return to Donald Duck. And there were ever so slight rumblings of discontent among the wholesalers and news dealers who sold the magazines.

Oddly, the first blow struck in the name of Goodness and Decency was not against horror. The blow fell on Gaines's new humor comic, *Panic*, which he started as a sister publication to *MAD*. Edited by the indefatigable one, Al Feldstein, *Panic* made its debut in December, 1953. To honor the season, Will Elder was assigned the job of illustrating "The Night Before Christmas." Never had Clement Clarke Moore's classic been adorned with such unusual art, and the result was an outburst of indignation from the state of Massachusetts. Cried the *Springfield Daily News*.

SANTA CLAUS COMIC DRAWS HOLYOKE BAN

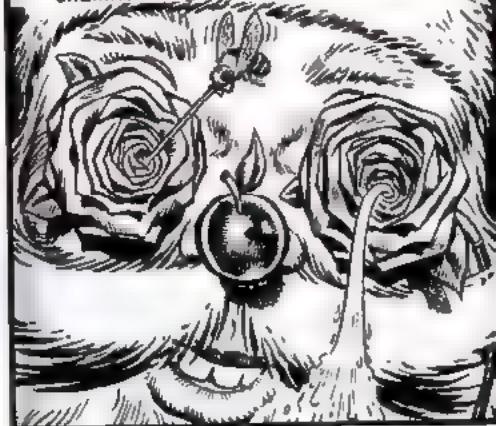
Holyoke, Dec. 19—A comic book described by Atty Gen. George Fingold as "desecrating Christmas," has been dropped from sale by the Holyoke News Co., local distributing agency, reported Martin Zanger, owner, today.

Councilor Patrick J. Sonny McDonough, of the Governor's Council, said the book showed Santa Claus riding a sled bearing a "just divorced" sign, and that a meat cleaver, ash can and two daggers were tied to the rear of the sled.

The Holyoke story was followed in the *Daily News* by a second article:

Boston, Dec. 19 (AP) — Action has been taken by Atty. Gen. George Fingold to stop sale of a new comic book, "Panic," which he said depicts the night before Christmas in a "pagan" manner. State Police Capt. Joseph Crescio and Fingold conferred yesterday on steps to shut off distribution of the book after the Governor's Council requested the book be banned.

HIS CHEEKS WERE LIKE ROSES, HIS NOSE LIKE A CHERRY...



Will Elder's depiction of Santa Claus was assailed by politicians and newspapers for "desecrating Christmas."

A hornet's nest had been stirred up, with the result that *Panic* attained a distinction greater than Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*. Not only was it banned in Boston, it was banned in the entire state of Massachusetts.

From the ultra-liberal vantage point of today, the Santa Claus affair seems a Victorian relic. But in 1953 much of America was holding fast to hallowed traditions and showing a distrust of anything that smeared church or country. And Santa Claus, of course, was a pillar of both houses.

"What we didn't realize back then," Gaines has said, "is that Santa Claus is a saint. We put a 'divorced' sign on the back of his sleigh. Santa Claus couldn't have been married, although it runs to my mind that I've seen pictures of Santa and Mrs. Claus up in their workshop with the elves."



At the time, Gaines was outraged and retaliated with a three-pronged counter-attack. First, he conferred with his new attorney, Martin Scheuman, who told the *New York Times* that the action was a "gross insult to the intelligence of the Massachusetts people."

"Every reasoning adult knows that there just isn't any Santa Claus," Scheuman declared, then charged that Gaines had suffered "wanton damage" to his interests so that censors could "come to the rescue of a wholly imaginary, mythological creature rarely believed to exist by children more than a few years old."

Next Gaines decided that if Massachusetts didn't want *Panic*, then *Panic* didn't want Massachusetts. He pulled all copies out of the state and vowed never to sell them there again.

Gaines's third move was concocted by business manager Lyle Stuart and made more grist for the newspapers, reported the *Boston Daily Globe*:

STATE BANS 'NIGHT BEFORE' PUBLISHER YANKS BIBLE TALES

A New York comic book publisher said last night that he was halting circulation of Biblical picture stories in Massachusetts because of the Bay State's ban on his cartoon version of "The Night Before Christmas." William Gaines said he was taking the Biblical picture books off this state's bookstands as a "retaliatory measure."

Gaines was referring, of course, to *Picture Stories From The Bible*, which he had inherited from his father. Pulling them out of Massachusetts seemed an appropriate gesture, but for one minor detail, which the

Springfield Union soon reported:

BIBLE STORY BOOK PUBLISHER TO WITHDRAW IS LONG GONE

The two "Picture Stories from the Bible" comic books which a New York publisher said will be withdrawn from Massachusetts haven't been sold in Springfield for at least five years, distributor Samuel Black said yesterday.

The Bible books hadn't been sold on newsstands anywhere for five years. They were, for all purposes, defunct. The hoax provided an interval of comic relief but didn't stop the defenders of Decency from completing their self-appointed rounds. A few days later, *Panic* was attacked again, this time by the New York City police.

The furor was not over Santa Claus. It was caused by a Mickey Spillane take-off, "My Gun Is The Jury," written by Feldstein and illustrated by Jack Davis. Spurred by an anti-*Panic* article in the *New York World Telegram and Sun*, the police descended on the EC office and bought a copy of the magazine. Stuart told Gaines to sell out of state. The police arrested Stuart and booked him on the charge of selling "obscene literature. If convicted, he faced a possible year in prison.

The American Civil Liberties Union urged attorney Scheuman not to wage an all-out defense until the case reached a higher court, but Scheuman saw no reason to wait. He argued the case in the lower court so effectively that the judges, in Gaines's words, "thought we were the ones on the side of God and that he'd been heard."

Gaines shakes his head in wonder and says, "This wasn't pornography. This wasn't even a nudist magazine. It was *Panic* Number One. But this

was what was going on back then. When you think of it now, you can't believe it."

It was only the beginning. In early 1954, the *Hartford Courant* unleashed a two-month editorial crusade against "Depravity for Children." The depravity, not unexpectedly, was the diet of horror and violence that tots were digesting in their comic book fare. The series assailed many publishers, among them Gaines, his latest issue of *Tales From The Crypt* (formerly *The Crypt of Terror*), being singled out as particularly offensive:

The first story is about adultery and murder. The second story is about a man who drowns his best friend in order to steal his best friend's girl. The third features a homicidal maniac and his sister who are boiled to death in hot water. The final story opens with a sadist torturing animals to death, then turns to murder with a butcher knife and an ax and ends with the killer being burned to death in a flaming car.

According to the *Courant*, it had been deluged with letters supporting its crusade. Only one statement had expressed an opposing view, and that was Gaines.

Accusing the *Courant* (founded in 1784) of "ethical senility," he declared that he had been "bombed" by the reporter who interviewed him. "The young man was made welcome at our office, as are all people who inquire of our books. We made no attempt to lecture or soft-soap or hoodwink issues," Gaines said. "The last thing you young reporter said to me was 'Don't get excited when you see the beginning of the series. It'll be pretty tame.' They want it that way. And we're going to offer the argument for comic books."

The *Courant* put down any idea of censoring comic books. Not censor





The Senate committee investigating comic books was out for blood. Bill Gaines (testifying voluntarily) was their sacrificial lamb.

ship but public "diligence" was the answer to "the filthy stream that flows from gold-plated sewers in New York." To Gaines, this was utter nonsense. Because of the *Courant's* crusade, the Hartford distributors were refusing to handle his comics, and if this wasn't censorship, then he was Frankenstein's bride.

"With comic-book censorship now a fact in Hartford, I look forward to an immediate drop in the crime rate in that fair city," Gaines told the *Courant*. "I trust that there will now be fewer wife-beatings, fewer robberies, fewer grafting politicians, and perhaps it is not too much to hope that, free from the 'evil' influence of comics, there will be fewer dishonest reporters."

Where would it all end, this hullabaloo over horror? It had already reached the *Reader's Digest*, whose zillion readers were made aware of the menace in an article by a *Courant* editor. And if Connecticut's Senator William A. Purtell had his way, the matter would be investigated by the Senate Judiciary Committee. Inquiries were made. Yes, the committee agreed, it would be a splendid idea, dovetailing their present probe into juvenile delinquency. True, the probe

would never match the nation's current big attraction, the Army-McCarthy

hearings, but it might have the makings of a lower-budget, terror-laden second feature.

As the Senators prepared to investigate, Gaines appealed to his readers for support. His method was unusual. Years earlier, Paul Kast had told Gaines about a fascist Kast had seen making a soapbox speech. Someone in the crowd called the speaker a Communist, which drove

the fascist up a wall. After all, no fascist ever wants to be called a Communist. Gaines felt that the people who were attacking him and his comics were fascists. So why not really annoy them and call them Communists?

Working with Stuart, he concocted a full-page editorial entitled "Are You A Red Dupe?" and ran it in each of his horror and suspense magazines:

ARE YOU A RED DUPE?

IN THE TOWN OF GAZOZOV IN THE HEART OF SOVIET RUSSIA YOUNG MELVIN SBUKHEM SAVONITCHKY PUB. SHED A COMIC MAGAZINE

SO THEY CAME AND SMASHED HIS FOUR-COLOUR PRESS

AND MURK MURK MELVIN THE NEXT MORNING

HERE IN AMERICA, WE CAN STILL PUBLISH COMIC MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, SUCO, BOOKS AND THE BIBLE. WE DON'T HAVE TO SEND THEM TO A CENSOR FIRST, NOT YET. BUT THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN AMERICA WHO WOULD LIKE TO CENSOR... WHO WOULD LIKE TO SUPPRESS COMICS. IT ISN'T THAT THEY DON'T LIKE COMICS FOR THEM! THEY DON'T LIKE THEM FOR THEM! LIKE THAT SOME OF THESE PEOPLE AREN'T AS GOOD FOR CHILDREN AS NO COMIC BOOKS OR SOMETHING. AND SOME ARE JUST PLAIN MEAN. BUT WE ARE CONCERNED WITH AN AMAZING REVELATION. AFTER MUCH SEARCHING ON NEWSPAPER FILES, WE'VE MADE AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY.

THE GROUP MOST ANXIOUS TO DESTROY COMICS ARE THE COMMUNISTS!

WE'RE SERIOUS! NO KIDDIN'! HERE! READ THIS

THE [COMMUNIST] PARTY WORKED ON JULY 15, 1953
BITTERLY ATTACHED THE A.C.E. OF T

"SO-CALLED COMICS" IN BRUTALIZING AMERICAN YOUTH, THE BETTER TO PREPARE THEM FOR MILITARY SERVICE IN IMPLEMENTING OUR GOVERNMENT'S AIMS OF WORLD DOMINION, AND TO ACCEPT THE ATROGENIES NOW BEING PERPETRATED BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND ARMENIANS IN KOREA UNDER THE FLAG OF THE UNITED NATIONS."

"THE CHILD'S NATURAL CHARACTER MUST BE DISTORTED TO FIT CIVILIZATION. FANTASY, VIOLENCE WILL PARALYZE HIS RESISTANCE, DIVERT HIS AGGRESSION TO UNREAL ENEMIES AND FRUSTRACTIONS, AND IN THIS WAY PREVENT HIM FROM REBELLING AGAINST PARENTS AND TEACHERS. THIS WILL GIVE HIM HIS RESISTANCE AGAINST SOCIETY, AND PREVENT REVOLUTION."

"SO THE NEXT TIME SOME JOKER GETS UP AT A P.T. MEETING, OR STARTS JABBERING ABOUT THE 'NAUGHTY COMIC BOOKS' AT YOUR LOCAL CANDY STORE, GIVE HIM THE 'ONCE OVER' WE'RE NOT SAYING HE IS A COMMUNIST! HE MAY BE INNOCENT OF THIS WHOLE THING. HE MAY BE A DUPE! HE MAY NOT EVEN READ THE DAILY WORKER!" IT'S JUST THAT HE'S SWALLOWED THE RED BAIT HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER!"

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Whenever anyone wrote Gaines a letter attacking his comics, he sent them a tearsheet of his Red Dupe ad. "It was all pretty dopey," he admits. "I made up the ad out of devilishness. It was supposed to be a spoof, but it didn't come off that way."

Not to the *Hartford Courant*, certainly, which devoted an entire editorial to the Red Dupe ad. "Thus do the sellers of literary sewage justify their profits from the debauch of youth," inveighed the newspaper. "But the jig is up for the panders of dirty comic books, and this Red scare is a frantic rear guard action from a discredited and soon-to-be-deactivated phase of publishing. Their end is in sight, and they know it."

A week before the Senate hearings were to start, Lyle Stuart said to Gaines, "Bill, there'll be a lot of people testifying against the comics. Somebody should testify for them and I think it should be you." Gaines agreed and asked the committee if he could appear as a voluntary witness. The committee was delighted to have him.

The hearings were staged at the Federal Courthouse on New York's Foley Square. Twenty-five people — publishers, editors, distributors, and juvenile delinquency experts — paraded before the Senators. The lawmakers paid special attention to Dr. Frederic Wertham, a psychia-

trist and the self-confessed arch-foe of horror and crime comics. Wertham had just written *Seduction of the Innocent*, a Book of-the-Month-Club selection, much of which linked the ruination of children with the reading of comics.

But the star of the proceedings was Gaines. He and Stuart had stayed up the entire previous night preparing an opening statement, parts of which follow:

"I was the first publisher in the United States to publish horror comics.

"I am responsible. I started them. Some may not like them. That is a matter of personal taste. It would be just as difficult to explain the hairless thrill of a horror story to Dr. Wertham as it would be to explain the sublimity of love to a frigid old maid.

"Our American children are for the most part normal children. They are bright children, but those who want to prohibit comic magazines seem to see dirty, sneaky, perverted monsters who use the comics as a

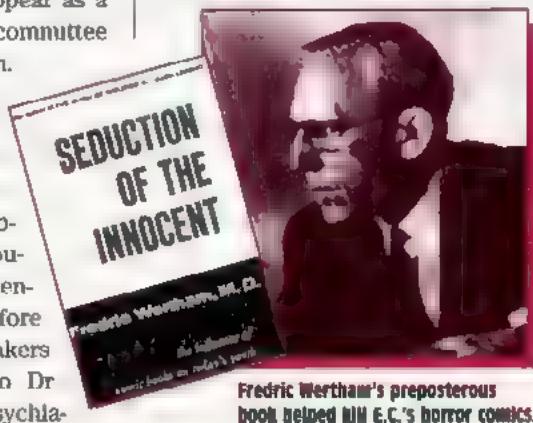
blueprint for action. Perverted little monsters are few and far between. They don't read comics.

"What are we afraid of? Are we afraid of our own children? Do we forget they are citizens, too, and entitled to select what to read or do? Do we think our children are so evil, so simple-minded, that it takes a story of murder to set them to murder, a story of robbery to set them to robbery?

"Jimmy Walker once remarked that he never knew a girl to be ruined by a book. Nobody has ever been ruined by a comic."

During the time of the hearings, Gaines was on a diet that required him to take Dexedrine. Anyone who has taken the drug knows that it does more than curb one's appetite. It sharpens one's reflexes and keeps one awake. When the drug wears off, a dulling, depressing fatigue often sets in and one craves sleep. Gaines had taken a Dexedrine early on the morning of the hearings, but the scheduled time for his testimony was delayed, and midway through his appearance the drug began to wear off. He recalls:

"At the beginning, I felt that I was really going to fix those bastards, but as time went on I could feel myself fading away. I was like a punch-drunk fighter. They were pelting me with questions and I couldn't locate the answers."



1 I have listened to the recordings of the hearings. Gaines sounds the same throughout. But there is a difference between sounds and substance. He performed well at the beginning. In these exchanges with Senator Thomas C. Hennings (D., Mo.) and Herbert Hannoch and Herbert Beaser, the committee investigators.

HENNINGS: Is that one of your series, the pictures of the two in the electric chair, the little girl down in the corner?

GAINES: Yes.

HENNINGS: What would be your judgment or conclusion as to the identification of the reader with that little girl, who has, to use the phrase, framed her mother and shot her father?

GAINES: You will see that the child leads a miserable life for seven and six-sevenths pages. It is only on the last page that she emerges triumphant.

HENNINGS [With irony]: As a result of murder and perjury, she emerges triumphant.

GAINES [Unshaken]: That's right. This is fiction.

HANNOCH [Scolding]: That's the D. Henry finish!

GAINES: Yes.

HANNOCH [Still scolding]: In other words, everybody reading that until the last picture would think this girl was gonna go to jail. So the D. Henry ending changes that and makes her a wonderful looking gall



GAINES: No one knows she did it until the last panel.

HANNOCH [Incredulous]: And you think it does the children lots of good to read these things?

GAINES [With vigor]: I don't think it does them a bit of good, sir, but I don't think it does them a bit of harm, either.

BEASER: Were you here this morning when Dr. Peck (a psychiatrist for Children's Court in New York City) testified?

GAINES: I was.

BEASER: Did you listen to his testimony as to the possible effect of these comics upon an emotionally maladjusted child?

GAINES: I heard it.

BEASER: You disagree with it?

GAINES: I disagree with it. Frankly, I could have brought many, many quotes from psychiatrists and child-welfare experts and so forth pleading the cause of the comic magazine. I did not do so because I figured this would all be covered thoroughly before I got here and it would just end up in a big melee of pitting expert against expert.

2 So far, so good, but then came the encounter that has become famed among horror buffs as *The Affair of the Severed Head*. The interlude introduced Gaines to Senator Estes Kefauver (D. Tenn.), who, two years earlier in the same courthouse, has emerged as a coonskin Galahad during his televised investigation of organized crime:

BEASER: Is the sole test of what you put into your magazines whether it sells? Is there any limit of what you wouldn't put in a magazine because you thought a child shouldn't see or read about it?

GAINES: No, I wouldn't say there is any limit for the reason you outlined. My only limits are bounds of good taste, what I consider good taste.

BEASER [Probing]: Then you think a child cannot in any way, shape, or manner, be hurt by anything that the child reads or sees?

GAINES: I do not believe so.

BEASER [Still probing]: There would be no limit actually to what you'd put in the magazines?

GAINES: Only within the bounds of good taste.

KEFAUVER [Doubtful]: Here is your May issue. This seems to be a man with a bloody ax holding a woman's head up which has

3 Despite the onslaught, Gaines was sticking to his guns (and axes and crowbars) and was holding his ground. His answers, if somewhat startling, were, at least, candid and reasonably grammatical. It was toward the end of his testimony that he began to slip:

HANNOCH: Do you know anything about this sheet called, "Are You a Red Dupa?"

GAINES: Yes, sir, I wrote it. It is going to be the inside front cover ad on five of my comic magazines which are forthcoming.

HANNOCH: And it's going to be an advertisement?

GAINES: Not an advertisement. It's an editorial.

been severed from her body. Do you think that's in good taste?

GAINES: Yes, sir, I do — for the cover of a horror comic. A cover in bad taste, for example, might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the blood could be seen dripping from it, and moving the body over a little further so that the neck of the body could be seen to be bloody. (Murmurs, stirring among spectators)

KEFAUVER [Still doubtful]: You've got blood coming out of her mouth.

GAINES: A little

KEFAUVER: And here's blood on the ax. I think most adults are shocked by that. Now here's a man with a woman in a boat and he's choking her to death with a crowbar. Is that in good taste?

GAINES: I think so.

HANNOCH: How could it be worse?

HENNINGS [To the rescue]: Mr. Chairman, I don't think it is really the function of our committee to argue with this gentleman.

Gaines didn't believe it for a minute. The editorial was pure spoofery and he should have said so. But the grilling had eroded his self-confidence, and the Dexedrine wearing off had

made him woozy. He was tired, scared, and couldn't think straight and wound up creating the impression that he was some kind of Red-baiting, horror-sated McCarthyite.

However, it was the *Affair of the Severed Head* that caught the fancy of the press. The odd fact was that

Gaines had run the cover as a gesture of good taste. Artist Johnny Craig had brought in the cover showing the severed head with the neck dripping blood just beneath it. Gaines ordered Craig to delete the neck, it being too gory even for a horror magazine.

The newspapers had a field day.



Newsday described Gaines as having "the detached manner of a surgeon after a hard day at the autopsy table." *The Hartford Courant*, ever vigilant, ran an editorial titled "Men of Taste," calling Gaines "a man to be pitied as well as censured," and suggested that "Gaines's loss would be the country's gain." Even Walter Winchell got into the act, the columnist inaccurately quoting Kefauver as saying that it was Gaines who had blood dripping from his mouth.

Gaines left the courthouse in a state of shock. He took to his bed for two days with a painfully knotted stomach, most likely psychosomatic. He was especially bothered by a column written by Max Lerner, a journalist whom Gaines had long revered. Wrote Lerner:

"The high point of the day was William M. Gaines, publisher of Entertaining Comics, who — had he not shown up in the Foley Square courtroom — would have had to be invented by a dramatist and played by Paul Douglas. (Lerner undoubtedly was referring to the role of Harry Brock, the loutish junk tycoon, whom Douglas portrayed on Broadway in *Born Yesterday*.)

"When Gaines defended as 'good taste' a particularly gory comic book cover, showing the severed head of a woman held aloft by a man with an ax, he was saying that every publisher of comic books is a moral as well as an esthetic law unto himself. This means that society is a jungle — a proposition we cannot accept."

At EC the strain was showing. The hearings brought forth no legislation, but more and more whole salers were refusing to touch horror. Gaines and Feldstein had lost some of their rapport, and Feldstein moved into a private office on another floor. Larry Stark, whom EC considered its top fan, has recalled the final days:



The severed head from the cover of *Crime SuspenStories* #22. A defiant Bill Gaines could not convince a Senate panel it was within the bounds of good taste.

Bill and Al were getting a little worn thin from the constant demand for stories. Their frazzled imaginations, plus the income-curve which dipped steadily... made writing an unpleasant chore. Feldstein fell back into doing ingeniously original descriptions of gruesome scenes, caring less and less for any objective or any personal standards of excellence. The whole industry was overstocked with horror, and even those who had once poured more art than blood into their writing could no longer think of artfully conceived stories. When the industry came under official scrutiny, they had no defense. Looking over issues, it's almost possible to point out precisely where everyone stopped caring how good their work was. Almost everything seems the same, but the soul is missing.

Gaines was fighting a one-man battle. Other publishers refused to back him up. "The outfits that copied us did nothing to help," recalls Feldstein. "Meanwhile the movie industry was enjoying a big laugh at our expense. They were coming out with horror films that made our stuff look like fairy tales."

A few weeks after the hearings, Gaines tried to rally his fellow publishers. The plan was to start a new comic association that would act as an action group. It would work with educators and psychologists to find out if there really was a link between

horror and crime and juvenile delinquency. It would employ a public relations staff to reclaim the public's shattered faith in comic books. Finally, it would protect publishers against the specter of censorship.

Gaines hired Wendell Willkie Hall for the first meeting. He was happily surprised when nine publishers showed

(Continued on page 70)



THE MAD WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES PART III

(Continued from page 27)

up. However, their first action was to vote to outlaw the words "crime," "horror," and "terror" in comics. Gaines rose from his seat. "This isn't what I had in mind," he said, and walked out of the hall.

Gaines or no Gaines, the publishers rushed to atone for previous sins. They formed the Comics Magazine Association of America, and then on September 16, 1954, named Judge Charles F. Murphy as comic book czar, with full power to ban all horror books.

Two days earlier, Gaines had thrown in the bloody towel. He announced that he was stopping the publication of his horror and suspense comics "because of a premise, that has never been proved, that they stimulate juvenile delinquency. We are not doing it so much for business reasons as because this seems to be what American parents want — and the parents should be served."

At once, Gaines was transformed from filth-mongering villain into high-minded hero. The press extolled him. Editorialized the *New York Daily News*:

"Here it seems to us, is an illustration of the principle we've long contended for: that there is only one right kind of censorship in a free-

press country. That is censorship by public opinion — by the customers who buy the product.

Thanks to Gaines for spotlighting these ancient truths once more."

The fact of the matter was somewhat different. Gaines couldn't stand the pressure from his wholesalers. "I'd been told that if I continued publishing my magazines, no one would handle them. I had no choice."

"Bill was crucified upon a cross of comics," Feldstein

has observed, his metaphor becoming doubly mixed when one remembers that Gaines is an atheist.

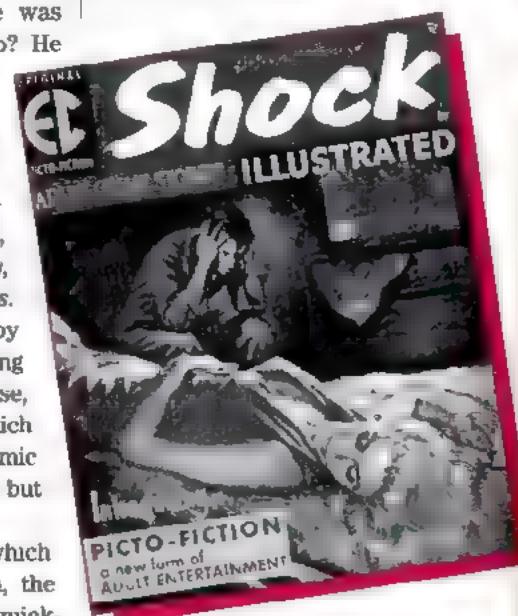
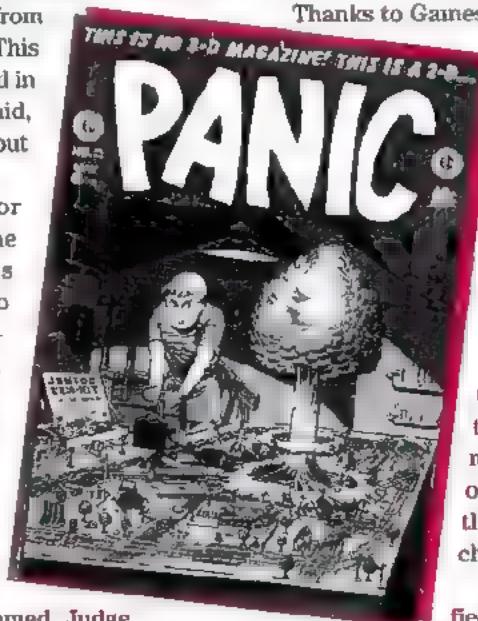
Now that his horror line was dead, what would Gaines do? He would inaugurate a new run of comics. These were the New Direction comics, which offered non-controversial titles such as *Aces High* (flying), *Extra!* (newspapers), *Impact* (adventure), *Piracy*, *Valor*, *MD*, and *Psychoanalysis*. All but one were edited by Feldstein, who was still hanging in with *Panic*. And, of course, there was Kurtzman's MAD, which had been changed from a comic into a twenty-five-cent slick, but more about that later.

Unlike the horror comics, which died a slow, agonizing death, the New Direction books expired quickly, almost in their sleep. Stack after stack came back, unopened by the

wholesalers. Gaines knew why He didn't subscribe to The Code.

The Code was a set of rules laid down by Murphy and the new Comics Magazine Association. Among other taboos, it forbade the use of "horror" or "terror" in a comic book title. It also prohibited all scenes of cannibalism, excessive bloodshed, depravity, and other old EC standbys. Gaines detested The Code because it smacked of censorship. "This is what our forefathers came to America to escape," he wrote in an appeal to his wholesalers.

But what really gripped him was The Code's attitude toward crime comics. Murphy had accepted his job as comic book czar on the condition that horror and crime be eliminated. The Code, however, allowed "crime" in a title just so long as the word was used with "restraint." Gaines felt betrayed. He had, after all, been forced to discontinue his horror books, and now Murphy's crew was allowing crime.



Panic (above left) and *Shock Illustrated* appeared at the end of the EC comics era.

Gaines implored the wholesalers to handle his magazines even though the books didn't bear the association's Seal of Approval "Ours is a clean, clean line," he stressed.

The appeal fell on deaf ears. Clean line or not, sales continued at a turtle-like clip. And there was a persistent rumor around the industry that a major publisher, who subscribed to The Code, had dropped strong hints that all magazines published by that troublemaker Gaines be blackballed.

The profits from the horror days were going fast. Resentfully but realistically, Gaines swallowed his pride and joined the Association. With his new comics bearing the Seal of Approval, they would now be distributed and would make money.

He was mistaken. Sales improved hardly at all. The painful truth was that Gaines was Puck's bad boy and that any EC comic, blessed with the Seal of Approval or not, was judged unfit for human consumption.

Gaines stayed with the association for ten months, during which time, he recalls, "Murphy's censors ripped our stories to pieces." He then resigned, vowing never to work under The Code again. "What it did to my stomach is unspeakable," he has said.

There was a way out of the mess, he felt, and that was to inaugurate still another line of magazines that kind of looked like comics but weren't comics at all. Technically, comics were ten-cent magazines in color, with balloons containing the dialogue. Gaines's magazines would sell for twenty-five cents, would be printed in black-and-white, and would contain pictures with a few

ning text above each panel. Not being comics, the magazines would not be bound by The Code and could, therefore, contain tales of horror and unrestrained crime.

Thus were born the four maga-

Gaines detested The Code because it smacked of censorship

zines known as Adult Picto-Fiction — *Terror Illustrated*, *Shock Illustrated*, *Crime Illustrated*, and *Confessions Illustrated*. Alas, they arrived stillborn and lasted two issues apiece. Gaines knew they were bombs almost immediately, but he kept them going through the Christmas season of 1955. His reason?

"I couldn't bring myself to fire anybody before Christmas. Besides, I'd built such a paternalistic organization that I couldn't conceive that any artist could make a living anywhere else. I was sure they were all going to starve. Needless to say, a week after I let the boys go, they were all working for other publishers and 'doing quite well.'

Unlike the festivities of previous years, the EC Christmas party in 1955 was something of a wake. The big year-end cash bonuses were a thing of the past. Gaines tramped the Bowery and found a store selling \$4.95 sterling silver salt and pepper shakers. He bought twenty and handed them out as bonuses.

In early 1956, the Picto-Fiction books ate up the last of the horror profits. Gaines was stony broke, back where he started when he took over the business almost ten years earlier. He would have to give up Picto-Fiction, perhaps stop publishing altogether. Fortunately, he was

owed \$110,000 by his national distributor, Leader News, which would just about cover what he owed his printing broker, George Dougherty. The only way Gaines could be hurt

ode
sorship

The phone rang. The call was from another publisher. Had Gaines gotten the word? Leader News was bankrupt.

Gaines was now \$110,000 in debt, and he had nothing left.

Nothing but MAD

CHAPTER 8

HELLO, HARVEY...
GOODBYE, HARVEY

With twenty three issues of MAD under his belt, Harvey Kurtzman was feeling his oats. He was editing the wackiest comic book in the industry. His readership actually included a coterie of thinking adults, and among the books in the EC stable MAD was the only one that escaped unscathed, despite the assaults of the press and the Senate committee.

Kurtzman disliked the horror comics. He found them offensive, a view that bothered Gaines, who liked team spirit and was distressed by dissension in the ranks. But even though Kurtzman sided with the Senators, Gaines believed his maverick editor was irreplaceable. What's more, outside the office they had good times. Gaines





and Nancy spent many pleasant evenings sitting around the Kurtzman fireplace, chatting with Harvey and his wife, Adele.

But Kurtzman was restless in comics. "I never felt I was a part of the legitimate publishing establishment," he recalls. "Comics were a bastard form. I wanted to get into the world of slicks. That was publishing. Of course, with the advantage of hindsight, I don't feel that way now."

That he did then was due, partly, to a 1954 article about MAD that appeared in *Pageant*. Later that year, *Pageant*'s editor offered Kurtzman a full-time job as his right-hand man. Kurtzman was tempted. *Pageant* was a slick. Also, comic-book censorship was coming and he feared that MAD was too freewheeling a book to survive it. He told

Gaines that he wanted to take the new job.

Gaines made a counterproposal.

"Harvey, you

once told me you wanted to turn MAD into a slick. Stay, and I'll let you do it."

Kurtzman agreed, naturally preferring to head his own magazine than to work as a subordinate someplace else.

Gaines felt relieved. MAD would become a twenty-five-cent, black-and-white magazine of humor, satire, and parody. The changeover would keep Kurtzman in the fold and would save MAD from The Code, which applied only to comics.

"The next day was one of the most exciting times in my life," Kurtzman recalls. "I ran down to the newsstand and bought a bunch of slick magazines to see what other people were doing. Eventually, I decided on a format that would departmentalize day-to-day events. It was a big experiment. I was scared to death when we abandoned the comic format, and I couldn't sleep wondering whether MAD would succeed in its new format."

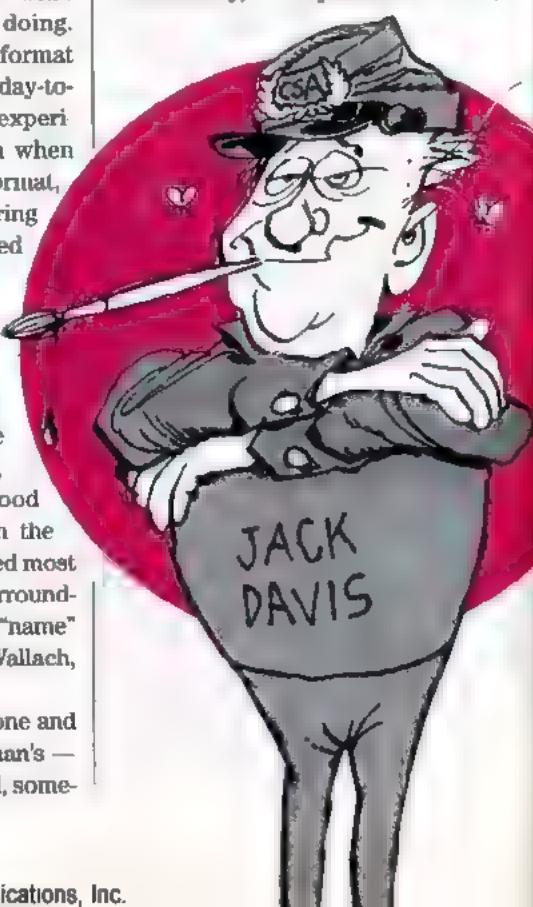
It would. The first issue sold out and had to be reprinted, which was something that just didn't happen in the magazine industry. Artists Will Elder, Jack Davis, and Wally Wood were as effective as ever in the new format. Kurtzman scripted most of the magazine himself, surrounding his own material with "name" items by Ernie Kovacs, Ira Wallach, and Stan Freberg.

Nonetheless, the overall tone and sense of humor were Kurtzman's — wild, unpredictable, cluttered, some-

times sophisticated, sometimes sophomoric. But MAD sold like pizza on Mulberry Street, and despite Kurtzman's disregard for deadlines — "I got too involved on the detail level, which I shouldn't have" — EC had a surprise winner.

The trouble began in late 1955, shortly after Gaines had raised Kurtzman's salary and Kurtzman had agreed to edit MAD for the coming year. But personal income was secondary to Kurtzman. His primary goal was higher rates for his contributors.

Thus began a running battle between Kurtzman, who didn't want to be concerned with matters of thrift, and Lyle Stuart, who did. Stuart had urged Kurtzman to stay with MAD at the time of the *Pageant* offer, but on the whole the two men didn't get along. Their conflict came to a head in December, when Kurtzman told Gaines that unless Stuart resigned Kurtzman would. Reluctantly, to preserve MAD,



Gaines let Stuart go.

Now, Kurtzman and his Right-hand man, Harry Chester, were dealing directly with Gaines on all levels. Gaines was not pleased with Kurtzman's spending, nor was he happy that MAD, officially a bimonthly, was coming out only four times a year because of his editor's deadline problems.

Friends offered advice. "You've got to realize that you can't be dependent on one man," said William Woolfolk. "MAD is a concept, and a concept runs itself. There is no one-man total genius in the world. You've got to lay down the law." But Gaines was afraid. To him, Kurtzman was the indispensable man.

As I said, Kurtzman never pushed for more money for himself. In January, he made what Gaines has called "a strange and generous request." Would Gaines cut Kurtzman's weekly salary by fifty dollars and let him spend the money to beef up the editorial fees of the magazine? Gaines agreed, and calm reigned for a while, at least at MAD.

During this period, of course, Gaines was watching his abortive Picto-Fiction eat up the last of his horror profits, and when his distributor, Leader News, went bankrupt, he wasn't sure that he could keep MAD, his one remaining success, going. He talked it over with Kurtzman.

"I'm trying to work out a deal to pay off my printing bill, but until I do, we're going to have to stop MAD."

Kurtzman urged Gaines to hold on. "I can make MAD work, but it's going to take money."

"Then we'll have to talk to my mother," Gaines said. "She owns half the business."

Both Gaines and Jessie had been left a sizable inheritance. Kurtzman, who can be quite per-

suasive, convinced Jessie to keep MAD going. She and Gaines each contributed fifty thousand dollars.

Meanwhile, Kurtzman had struck up an acquaintance with *Playboy*'s Hugh Hefner, and the two men hit it off at once.

"We felt a great admiration for each other," Kurtzman has said. "He made no offer, but he led me to believe I could work for him any time. The big thing that happened was the vibrations between us."

In outlook, Hefner was the opposite of Gaines. Hefner has never believed in standing pat, and his expansionist views brought home to Kurtzman the frustration he felt at MAD.

"I wanted control of the editorial package," Kurtzman has said. "I didn't have it really. Bill gave me the freedom to write what I wanted, but there were larger questions, like the design of the magazine and how much we could spend on it. I had no power in this area. I tried experiments with new kinds of material and talent, but the rates I wanted to pay were more than Bill wanted to pay. There's some value in trying new things. With Bill, it was always promises, promises."

In early April, Kurtzman told

Gaines that he wanted a chunk of EC stock. Gaines offered him 10 percent, adding that it was the last and best offer he would make and that he was not pleased with Kurtzman's pressure methods.

Ten percent would not solve Kurtzman's dilemma. A day or two later, via Harry Chester, he threw out a demand that would provide a final solution.

"Harvey wants fifty-one percent of the business," Chester told Gaines.

Gaines picked up the phone and called Kurtzman, who was home.

"Hello there, Harvey. Harry tells me you want fifty-one

percent of the business."

"That's right, Bill."

"Harvey! You want fifty-one percent of my business?"

"Yes, Bill."

"Goodbye, Harvey."

"What do you mean?"

"Goodbye, Harvey."

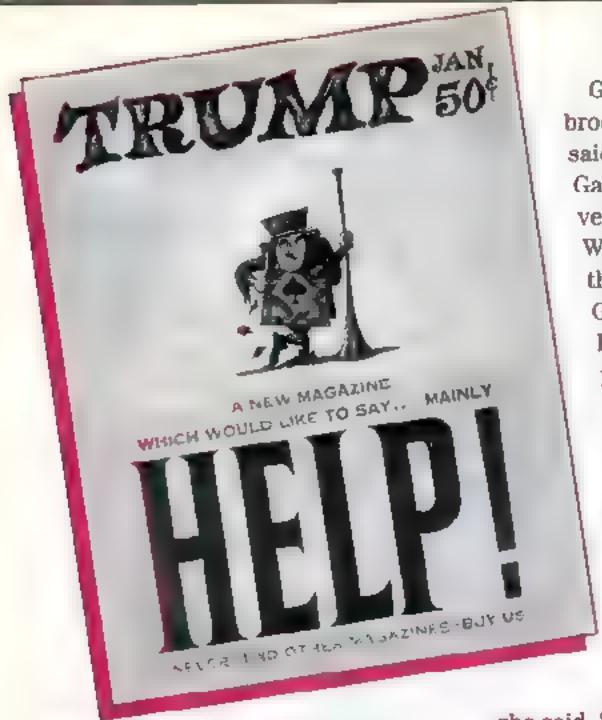
"You'll be sorry, Bill."

"Goodbye,

Harvey."

Gaines was thunderstruck. He ran





The second and final issue of *Trump* — Harvey Kurtzman's first project after leaving MAD.

to his attorney, Martin Scheiman, and asked him to call Kurtzman to verify the conversation.

"Yes, Bill," Scheiman said after hanging up. "You heard correctly."

Gaines felt lost. He was convinced Kurtzman was irreplaceable. He got on the phone with Stuart, who was vacationing in Florida.

"Lyle, I've got a problem. Harvey and Harry want fifty one percent of the business. What should I do?"

"Throw them out the window," Stuart said.

Gaines did not welcome the levity of the reply. "Lyle, I'm serious. What should I do?"

"I repeat — throw them out the window."

"Well, I guess that's the end of MAD."

"Get Feldstein."

"I'm not sure he can do it."

"Of course he can. He did *Panic*."



Gaines hung up and brooded. Feldstein, Stuart said to get Feldstein. Gaines remembered a conversation he'd had with William Woolfolk when they were discussing Gaines's reliance on Kurtzman. "I may not be your average reader," Woolfolk had said, "but I was never able to tell the difference between Kurtzman's early MAD and Feldstein's *Panic*."

Gaines talked over the problem with new wife Nancy. "I agree,"

she said. "Get Feldstein."

Al Feldstein had been out of work for four months. Late one afternoon, after a fruitless day of job-hunting, he was returning home on the Long Island Railroad. He got off the train at his stop, Merrick, and beheld a familiar figure standing on the platform. It was Gaines.

"Al, Harvey's left and I'd like you to come back. I don't know if we'll continue with MAD, but we'll do something."

He was outraged by an article on Hefner in Time, plumping Trump and dismissing MAD as "a short-lived satirical pulp."

"We should do MAD," Feldstein said.

"Well, whatever we do, you'll go all the way with me."

As for Kurtzman, his swan song had ended but his memory lingered on. He had known, of course, that there was virtually no chance of Gaines relinquishing 51 percent of the business. If Gaines had, through some stroke of insanity, agreed to the demand, Kurtzman would have



acquired full editorial control.

But Gaines had refused as expected, and now Kurtzman was free to do what he pleased. Within a month, he and Hugh Hefner were drawing up plans for a humor magazine known around the *Playboy* offices as Project X. Kurtzman would be editor with full control. The magazine would require a staff of zany artists, naturally, and Kurtzman knew where to look first — to MAD and to Will Elder, Jack Davis, and Wally Wood. The problem was that Hefner wanted them exclusively, and, well, er-ahem, all three had been working for Gaines for several years.

It was an awkward time for the artists. Least so, perhaps, for Elder, who for years had looked on Kurtzman as an older brother. "I left MAD reluctantly," Elder says. "I

liked it, it gave me liberties in my art I never had before. I'd been working exclusively with Harvey, sharing a studio with him, and I left with him. Did I desert MAD? It's a matter of semantics. MAD was taking off. If it had been failing, I don't think my leaving would have caused any problems."

Jack Davis agonized for weeks whether to stay or go. "I knew how upset I'd be if I left Bill, but Harvey

started MAD and was a close friend. I had a choice and I went with Harvey."

As for Wally Wood, he didn't want to be owned by anyone, so for a month he worked for both outfits. Hefner, Kurtzman, and Chester came to Wood's apartment with an ultimatum. "Either you're with us or against us," Hefner said. Wood said he'd sleep on it. The next morning he told Hefner he was sticking with MAD.

Project X made its debut in November, 1956, as *Trump*, a fifty-four-page, full-color humor magazine printed on sturdy, non-comic book paper and featuring a *Playboy*-sized fold-out. Gaines browsed through it with mixed feelings.

He was still boiling over Kurtzman's departure, coming, as it did, only two months after Harvey had persuaded Gaines and his mother to pour \$100,000 into MAD.

He felt resentment toward Hefner, with whom he had exchanged cordial correspondence earlier in the year, and who now had raided MAD's art staff and was publishing a competing magazine.

He was miffed each time a reader, confused by Kurtzman's switch, ordered a *Trump* subscription from MAD.

He was outraged by an article on Hefner in *Time*, plumping *Trump* and dismissing MAD as "a short-lived satirical pulp." Hefner had worked for *Esquire*, and many people believed *Playboy* was eating into *Esquire*'s audience. Gaines intemperately wrote *Esquire*, suggesting that it and MAD publish articles about each other. "I feel it would be to the advantage of both of us," Gaines wrote, "if he [Hefner] were to fall on his face and drop some of those profits he's reaping from *Playboy*." Nothing came of the scheme.

But most of all it was Kurtzman. After reading the first *Trump*,

Gaines sent his ex-editor a letter:

Harvey Kurtzman
New York

November 21, 1956

Dear ole Harvey...

Saw Trump. Some very nice art--Wally's "Hansel & Gretel", Willie's "Epic of Man", and Jack's "Hunting." Also a ~~very~~ funny piece--Annual Report! Beautiful print job. I wish you great success.

But frankly, I doubt it! Not at half a buck! I'm not that impressed. In fact, we were all quite relieved around here. Which brings me to the point of this letter.

You've taken certain actions which if Trump fails I don't see how you're going to square with your conscience. For many years I listened to you expounding morals and scruples in business, but what you've done transcends business. What you've done is traded on your friendship for Willie and Jack to gain what you believed would be a business advantage for yourself. You've hypnotised both of them into accepting less money from Trump with no contracts over more money from MAD with ~~reasonably~~ guaranteed contracts.

Kurtzman replied:



Dear Bill:

After five years of mutual friendship, you now sit back there figuring what a rat I actually am and what jerks Willy and Jack actually are and how it's all because of hypnotism.

We have both done well by each other and I want nothing that rightfully belongs to you.

What do you want from my life?

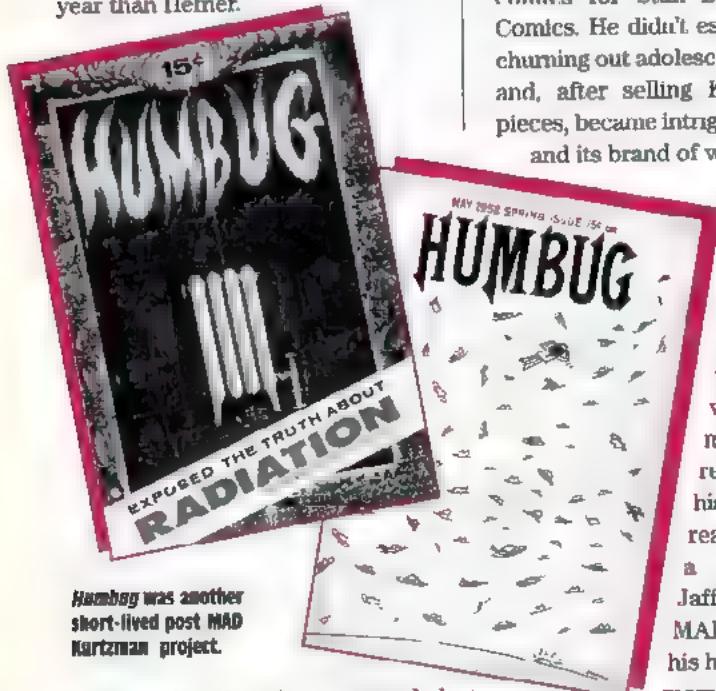
sincerely,

Harvey



"It was Harvey and his magnetism. He had a way of getting you excited about what he was doing."

The fact is that Gaines did believe that Kurtzman held some sort of spell over his followers. Gaines had offered both Elder and Davis one-year, guaranteed contracts, payable in full out of Gaines's pocket should MAD fold. Elder refused immediately. Davis thought about it, then also refused even though Gaines offered him three thousand dollars more per year than Hefner.



Humbug was another short-lived post MAD Kurtzman project.

Gaines's offer of a contract led Davis to demand a similar arrangement at *Trump*. He was the only artist who did. After *Trump* folded, Hefner was obliged to buy cartoons from Davis for *Playboy* to fulfill the remainder of the contract. Considering *Playboy's* generous rates and the excellence of

Davis's art, both sides presumably wound up happy.

What was it about Harvey Kurtzman that in

spired such allegiance? Does the so-called Kurtzman charisma really exist? Let us examine the experience of Al Jaffee.

While editing MAD, Kurtzman became convinced that Jaffee, a writer as well as an artist, would be a prize addition to the staff. Jaffee, however, was earning a comfortable living, packaging two teen-age comics for Stan Lee at Timely Comics. He didn't especially enjoy churning out adolescent potboilers, and, after selling Kurtzman two pieces, became intrigued with MAD and its brand of wacky satire.

Kurtzman urged Jaffee to become a regular contributor. Here, after all, was an outlet where a humorist could really express his talents, could really cross into a fresh field. Jaffee, visions of MAD dancing in his head, seized the moment to give up one of his teen-age comics. Lee asked Jaffee to reconsider. Jaffee refused, then called Kurtzman to announce the news.

"Harvey, I've given up one of my books. Now I'll have time to do more work for you."

"There's something I have to tell you," said Kurtzman, the "something" being that he had left MAD.

"But I've burned half my bridges behind me," said Jaffee.

"There may be a new project coming up," Kurtzman hinted, "but I can't talk about it just now."

The new project was, of course, *Trump*, and a week later Kurtzman invited Jaffee to become a full-time contributor at a yearly salary that was one-half of what Jaffee had been making. Jaffee responded by giving up his other teen-age comic and joining the *Trump* crew.

Today, Jaffee is a topflight freelance, whose accounts, in addition to MAD, include *Esquire*, *Playboy*, and numerous advertising agencies.



Yet he looks back on that decision to halve his income with no particular feeling of astonishment.

"It was Harvey and his magnetism. He had a way of getting you excited about what he was doing. It was like he was organizing a grand adventure, and being asked to join made you feel unique. He's always been happiest bringing together a group to produce a special product, just so long as he's Number One and everyone's on his wavelength."

Jaffee remains intrigued by the relationship. "I'd work five days on a piece and take it up to Harvey's house. I'd hand over what I'd done and wait for a reaction. There wasn't any. Harvey would take it and tell me he'd look it over later. Finally

(Continued on page 85)



THE MAD WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES PART III

(Continued from page 76)

he'd phone me and give the most minute, soul-searching critique you can imagine, down to the tiniest, scratchiest line. He had to be alone with it. It was like he was taking a precious, private trip and you were an invited guest."

Kurtzman's trip at *Trump* came to an abrupt end after the second issue. Apparently, both issues sold exceedingly well, but could not overcome the high price of production. More than a year after the magazine's demise, a *Playboy* executive wrote Lyle Stuart a letter chronicling *Playboy's* "admittedly most unhappy journey into the satire field."

After acknowledging that *Trump* would have had to have sold more than 100 percent to make a profit, the letter tried to smooth any ruffled feathers at MAD:

"Naturally, all any of us really knew about the Kurtzman-MAD-Gaines situation was what Harvey told us about it, but we never thought of our entry into the satire field as being any sort of imitation, since Kurtzman and company came to us as free agents and were, to the best of our knowledge, the original creators of MAD. It was, indeed, our considerable admiration for MAD from its earliest issues that drew us into joining forces with Kurtzman. What we didn't recognize at the time, of course, was Bill Gaines's own considerable part in the non-creative end of MAD's growth and success. And when Kurtzman was left to his own devices, without the necessary control, chaos resulted."

Whatever differences existed between Gaines and Ilefner were soon patched up, the two men often exchanging flattering notes on one another's magazine. But as for Gaines and Kurtzman — well, they weren't exactly penpals. There was the matter of the paperback royalties.

Back in 1954, Ballantine Books began reprinting material from the old

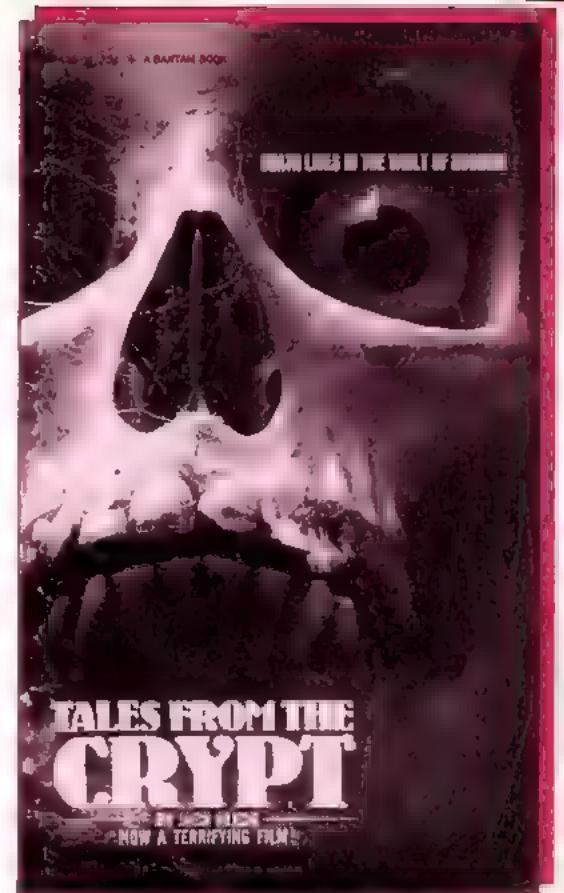
comic book MAD in paperbacks. Gaines had been splitting the royalties with the MAD crew, but cut out Kurtzman, Elder, and Davis after they switched to *Trump*. Kurtzman felt Gaines owed him royalties and sued. It was, as *Look* put it, "as if the Prodigal Son had turned up only to slap a non-support summons in the old man's hand."

Gaines was not feeling fatherly. He had written Kurtzman:

"I disagree with your statement that I owe you any money. I believe that the reverse is the case, and that the damage you caused me when you breached your employment agreement and raided my art staff makes me your creditor."

Lawyers exchanged letters. Gaines filed a counter-claim. Years passed. The briefs gathered dust. In 1966, Kurtzman asked National Periodical Publications for permission to reprint some of their old super-hero comics in an anthology he was editing. To his astonishment, he discovered that National now owned MAD, and that National, of course, was not about to hand out reprint rights to somebody who was suing them. National felt the case should be settled out of court. Gaines and Martin Scheiman did not agree, but in late 1966 Scheiman died and Gaines lost his main pillar of support. Eventually, he settled, mostly because he no longer owned MAD and felt that it wasn't right to involve National in a fight that wasn't theirs. But he still believes that Kurtzman should have received nothing.

In 1972, a batch of old horror stories were distilled into a motion picture, *Tales From The Crypt*. Gaines divvied up his proceeds with his edi-



Cover of the 1972 novelization of the film version of the Gaines comic book *Tales From the Crypt*.

1966,

tors and artists of the horror days. Kurtzman got nothing — right? Wrong. Gaines paid Kurtzman the second highest amount (after Feldstein).

"I can't exactly explain my actions," Gaines has said. "Harvey didn't work much in horror; he hated horror. But he was the second most important man at EC during the horror days. Maybe it's my own compulsion to be fair. Maybe I've mellowed. But I still wouldn't pay him a dime on MAD if I could help it."

And what of Kurtzman after the *Trump* disaster? Well, he formed a corporation and founded a new humor magazine, *Humbug*. His charisma was still working. The corporation officers, who sunk money into the operation, were his artists, one of whom was Al Jaffee. *Humbug* ran



into distribution problems and folded after fourteen issues, taking the entire investment with it.

Both *Trump* and *Humbug* were worthy magazines that died of operational illness. To my mind, they lead the list of the several dozen magazines that have followed in MAD's footsteps. Both were filled with the Kurtzman brand of humor, which is a special sort of thing, requiring a special sort of reader. Even if Kurtzman had overcome the business problems, the question remains: Were there enough readers on his wavelength with which to develop a mass audience?

Kurtzman's final attempt with a magazine was *Help!*, the title perhaps bearing Freudian overtones. It was a patchwork book cluttered with ballooned photo gags and was unworthy of Kurtzman's talent.

Some Kurtzman followers believe that he turned out his best humor in his comic-strip parodies in the old MAD. Today he and Will Elder produce *Playboy's* "Little Annie Fanny," which transforms Harold Gray's ageless orphan into a busty nymph, who frolics, innocently safe, among

lechers and other sexually liberated creatures. It is, surely, the most exquisitely rendered comic parody of all time and is a far cry from the old MAD's "Little Orphan Melvin" of twenty years ago.

Still, they are comedic cousins, which makes one wonder if perhaps Harvey Kurtzman had a home all along and didn't know it.

CHAPTER 9

THE MAKING OF MAD

Any worries Gaines had about replacing Harvey Kurtzman vanished quickly. Al Feldstein took over the editorship with the zeal of a linebacker coming off the bench. Gaines was amazed to look in Feldstein's office the first day and see his new editor assembling the next issue as if he'd been doing it a lifetime.

Feldstein was pretty much on his own. When Kurtzman left, John Putnam instinctively told Gaines he would stay on as art director. Not that Kurtzman ever tried to lure Putnam away. Oddly, the two men, both intellectual types, felt uncomfortable working together. Conversely, Putnam and Feldstein, who are worlds apart in life styles, soon found that they operated as a smooth-running team.

Then Feldstein got lucky. A few days after he took over, there was a knock on his door and in walked a young cartoonist bearing some of the zaniest art Feldstein had ever seen. The cartoonist was Don Martin, and he drew pictures of people with square heads and double-jointed feet. What's more, he was the happiest of combinations — a writer-artist.

Whenever someone finds out that I write for MAD, the first question I usually get is, "What's Don Martin like?" My answer is invariably disappointing. Don Martin is the antithesis of the characters he draws. Physically he is good-looking, socially he is totally uneccentric, and verbally he almost never utters "Spap!" "Blort!" "Vreech!" or "Katoonga!" His insanity emerges in his drawings, which have earned him the title of MAD's Maddest Artist, which, on paper, he most certainly is.

Another new talent was Mort Drucker. Feldstein liked his samples and showed them to Gaines, who was in his office watching the Dodgers play the Yankees in the 1956 World Series. Gaines told Drucker, "If the Dodgers win, you're hired." The Dodgers won the

game, which was

fortunate for MAD. Drucker eventually becoming the magazine's star caricaturist.

Feldstein was looking for balance that would give MAD a more general appeal. He thought Kurtzman had started in the right direction but that there was too much of one kind of humor — Kurtzman's. "I didn't reverse Harvey's direction," Feldstein has said. "I thought there were signs of MAD going off on a tangent, and I tried to stop it."

Within a year, he built up a stable



"I think Harvey resented it when I suggested a creative touch for an article," Putnam has said. "Not so Feldstein. The only thing he demands is clarity."

At the time, Feldstein was less interested in clarity than in artists, or, to be more specific, the lack of them. Happily, Wally Wood had stayed on, but Will Elder was gone and Jack Davis was going

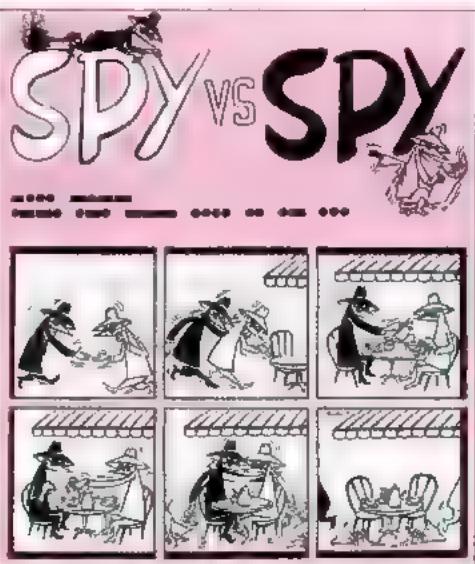
of artists, most of whom work for MAD today—Wood, Martin, Drucker, George Woodbridge, Dave Berg,

brother?" In fact he still can't pronounce his editor's name, referring to him as "Fsstn." From time to time,

Prohias flies to Miami, where he is lionized among the Cuban refugees there as The Man Who Made It.

Three years later, another Latin arrived at MAD. He was Sergio Aragones, a Spaniard who grew up in Mexico, where he had been drawing cartoons for eight dollars a week. Aragones asked to see Prohias, who promptly introduced Aragones around the office. "My brother," Prohias exclaimed as he introduced Aragones to Jerry DeFuccio. "Pleased to meet you, Mr Prohias," said DeFuccio. "No, my name is Sergio Aragones," said Aragones.

When Aragones was introduced to Gaines, he bowed and called him "Señor." It was difficult for him to understand the infor-



A Spy is born — Antonio Prohias' first Spy Vs. Spy from January, 1961

horror veteran Joe Orlando, Kelly Freas, Norman Mingo, and Bob Clarke. Clarke had been working on Madison Avenue and was sick of the restrictions ad agencies put on their talent. To him, MAD, with its vir-

tual lack of

labors, was a dream job.

In 1959 arrived Antonio Prohias, a refugee from Castro's Cuba, who spoke no English and required John Putnam to serve as his interpreter. Prohias, who had been one of Havana's top editorial cartoonists, came in with an espionage spoof, "Spy Vs. Spy," which Feldstein snapped up and has been running ever since. It is impossible to carry on a conversation with Prohias. After ten years, his English is limited to "Hello" and "How are you,"

mality of the place. In fact, it was two years before Aragones was able to call Gaines by his first name, which eventually came out as "Beel."

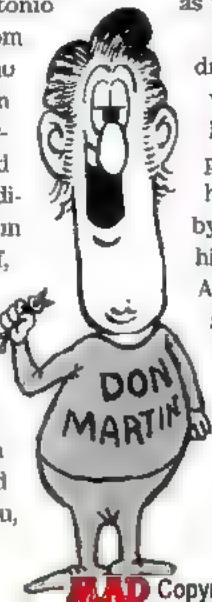
Like Prohias, Aragones draws pictures without words. Of all MAD's artists, he is the quickest with a pen. At comic conventions he is constantly surrounded by youngsters beseeching him to draw them a cartoon. Aragones can never say no and has dashed off hundreds of on-the-spot, Chaplinesque drawings on pieces of cardboard, paper napkins, and scraps of wrapping paper. And what of the artists

who had left MAD to go with Harvey Kurtzman? Will Elder, as of this writing, has made no effort to return. Jack Davis, after following Kurtzman through *Trump and Humbug*, branched into advertising and magazine illustration, eventually becoming one of the most successful freelances in the country. He returned to MAD in 1965 and today turns out about an article per issue, which is all he has time for. Gaines, still convinced that Davis had been bewitched by Kurtzman, is pleased to have his old artist back in the pack.

Al Jaffee had returned years earlier, right after *Humbug* folded. He soon became one of MAD's most versatile talents and steadiest contributors. In 1964, he created the MAD Fold-In, which was introduced as a "cheap, economy minded" version of the ambitious fold-outs

featured in *Playboy* and *Life*. Jaffee's Fold In has since graced virtually every inside back cover and is, to my mind, MAD's most singularly appealing regular feature.

A current issue of MAD offers a panorama of styles, ranging from the adroit caricatures of Mort Drucker and Angelo Torres to the malformed subhumans of Don Martin. Jack Davis is often chosen to illustrate pieces about football and other spectacles of athletic mayhem. George Woodbridge has become MAD's specialist in depicting scenes of student rioting and political violence. Paul Coker, who lives by himself in an isolated Big Sur studio, contributes an off-beat, feathery kind of whimsy while Antonio Prohias and

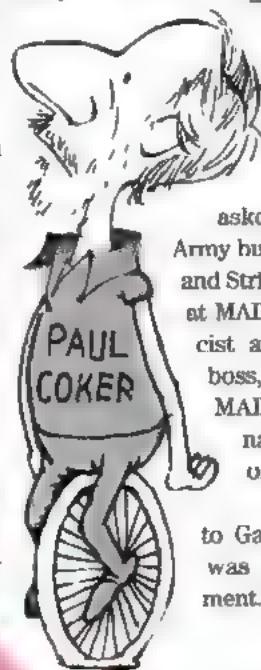




Sergio Aragones provide a wordless change of pace. Bob Clarke, with his slick, decorative style, balances things out, as does Jack Rickard, with his neat versatility. Most of MAD's covers are painted by Norman Mingo, who is still the only artist who can render a perfect Alfred E. Neuman.

Finally, there is Dave Berg, who occupies a world of his own. His regular feature, "The Lighter Side," reflects a humor unlike anything else in the magazine — simplistic, Middle American, often like the TV situation comedies that MAD parodies. But Berg's pages are extremely popular, a phenomenon that occasionally bewilders some of the magazine's more sophisticated types.

Berg has a heavier side. An extremely religious fellow, he is perhaps the world's only Ten Commandments specialist, professing to believe in only the last five. Entering the MAD office for an appointment, he greets staffers with the utterance, "May God give you His blessing." Gaines, being an atheist, accepts Berg's salutations by



responding tolerantly, "Dave Berg, shut the hell up." This does not deter Berg, who views his publisher as a combination father image and misguided, godless saint. He tells others that Gaines, far from being an atheist, is a highly ethical, religious man. This maddens Gaines, partly because he objects to Berg's proselytizing, mostly because he detests sentimentality, particularly when it is directed at him.

As for MAD's writers, well, that's a different story. When he first took over, Feldstein continued Kurtzman's policy of illustrating material by "names," such as Henry Morgan, Ernie Kovacs, Bob and Ray, and Orson Bean.

"We couldn't afford them," Feldstein recalls, "so I begged for old material that I could get cheaply."

The first writer to come along who wound up a steady contributor happened to be myself. In early 1957, I had quit a well-paying but unrewarding public relations job

and was looking for freelance work. One

day I picked up a copy of MAD, read it through, and said aloud to no one, "I can write this stuff."

I asked Jack Squire, a recent Army buddy from Pacific Stars and Stripes, if he knew anyone at MAD. Squire, then a publicist at *Look*, said that his boss, Ralph Ginzburg, knew MAD's publisher, a man named Grimes or Gantz or something like that.

Aided by a phone call to Gaines from Ginzburg, I was granted an appointment. I shall never forget my

first impression of that office on Lafayette Street.

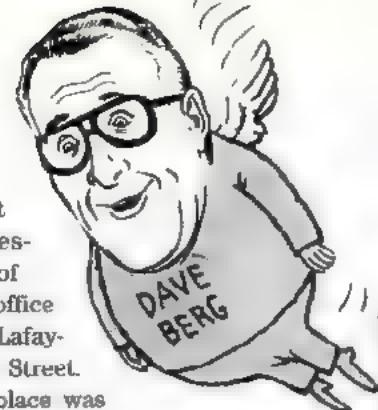
The place was totally unlike the neat, carpeted agencies I'd been used to. MAD's offices, for want of a better word, looked used.

I met the staff. Crouched over a drawing board in an incredibly cluttered room called the Art Department was a thoroughly unkempt man. He, I learned, was art director John Putnam. He appeared to be in a perpetual state of amusement, and I decided instantly he was one of the great eccentrics.

In the center of the next office, which happened to be the largest room on the premises, was a very tidy desk in back of which sat a plumpish, jovial, sportshirted man with a crew cut. This person, I found out, was publisher William M. Gaines, who seemed to require this comparatively large space, and of whom I have no other first recollection.

Sharing a single desk at the end of a hallway were two dark-haired young men, one of whom appeared to be dressed for a banquet, the other for a welders' picnic. These turned out to be associate editors Jerry DeFuccio and Nick Meglin, whose main function, so far as I could make out, was to discuss which one was going to get to use the desk.

The man escorting me was the editor, Al Feldstein, a dark-complected chap who, once the tour was over, ushered me into his office and asked me, after the barest minimum of pleasantries, what ideas I had for the magazine.



I handed him a piece called "Why I Left the Army and Became a Civilian," the point of which was that civilian life, with its regimentation and chains of command, was just as bad as being in the Army. Feldstein bought it on the spot.

"My God," I said to myself, "it's that easy."

It wasn't. Being a writer for MAD in its formative years was a mixed bag. In 1972, Gaines would tell AP writer Lynn Sherr, "We recognize the writer as the most revered of all creatures." In the early years, we had not quite reached that exalted status.

Feldstein and Gaines had graduated from the comic book school and weren't sure just what value to place on writers. So until 1959, we received virtually no bylines and were paid one-third the page rate of artists. Equal parity came as Gaines and Feldstein realized that the magazine couldn't prosper without good scripts and that using "name" material was not the way to build a corps of contributors. Thanks in great part to Nick Meglin, who served as a kind of talent scout for writers, an elite group emerged in the early 1960's, which has carried the magazine to the present.

Nearly all of MAD's scripts are filtered through Feldstein's typewriter. During his first years, in his zeal to make sure that every joke was understood, he over edited, which sometimes vexed his writers. But gradually, as Feldstein developed his sense of humor and the writers refined theirs, the early meat-cleaver comedy evolved into the sharper, more satiric style that so much of MAD possesses today.

Recently, I chatted with a musician of the New York Philharmonic, whose eleven-year-old son is an avid MAD reader. The man took a peek at the magazine and was surprised to

find that it was often sophisticated and sprinkled with rather subtle political messages. He tried to explain these nuances to his son,

Gaines, being an atheist, accepts Berg's salutations by responding tolerantly, "Dave Berg, shut the hell up."

who would have none of it. "I just like it," the boy said.

MAD appeals on two levels. The first is the slapstick, sight-gag kind of humor exemplified by the lunacies of Don Martin. The second level extends to wit, satire, and parody and requires some pre-conditioned knowledge of politics, adver-



The scene of the crime: MAD's original headquarters at 225 Lafayette Street in New York.

A rather bewildered Western Union delivery boy found Meglin, who ripped open the envelope. The message inside said, "Save me a lick, Arnie."

Kogen is possibly the only person extant who keeps a size twelve bronzed shoe on his mantelpiece.

"My folks forgot to bronze my shoe when I was a baby," he explains, "so I did it myself later." When Kogen was out of work, he placed a Situations Wanted ad in the *New York Times*: "Shepherd, Experienced. Will not cry wolf." A *Times* clerk asked Kogen about the phrase, "Will not cry wolf." "It's a familiar line in the trade," Kogen explained. "A man who won't cry wolf is one who'll stick to his job and watch over his flock." The *Times* ran the ad, but Kogen got no replies.

Tom Koch, who had been writing radio material for Bob and Ray, was commandeered by Feldstein late in 1957. Koch pioneered MAD's parodies of magazines — *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Bitter Homes and Gardens*, *National Geographic*. The last-named featured such articles as "Why Pygmies Smell Bad," "Don't Talk To Me About Peruvians," and "We Couldn't Find the Pennsylvania Turnpike (Daring Sanford and Birdie Ugnew, who Missed the Asian Continent on Their Last Assignment, Fumble the Ball Again)."

Occasionally, in vain efforts to improve his magazine's image, Gaines has employed a public relations man. One of the gentlemen presented with this thankless task was Larry Gore, who can best be described as two parts Groucho Marx, one part Machiavelli.

Before his brief stint with MAD, Gore brightened the Christmas season by



Each issue of MAD usually presents its version of a current motion picture and TV series. The movie spoofs are the special province of Larry Siegel, as can be seen in these excerpts from his takeoff of *Lawrence of Arabia*.

PRINCE: English, look at you! You are all burned and toasted from the sun, and yet you are so ready to go back across the desert on this foolhardy mission!

LAWRENCE: Yes, Prince Fizzle, I am ready!

PRINCE: Hey, All! A TOASTED ENGLISH - TO GO!

LAWRENCE: All-Oven, I love the desert and I love your people. I wonder what deep mysterious excerpts from the Koran are falling from their lips.

1ST ARAB: Hot enough for you?

2ND ARAB: I hear it's 114 in the shade!

3RD ARAB: Too bad there's no shade!

4TH ARAB: The guy on the Late News predicted rain!

5TH ARAB: I hope he's wrong! I washed my camel before we left!

Or this sample of his take-off of *Patton*:

PATTON: This is the filthiest #X%&! barrack I've ever seen! Dirty floor...dirty walls...dirty beds! And what's this? DIRTY PIN-UP PICTURES!?

SOLDIER: But, Sir, I don't think you know -

PATTON: What would your mother say if she saw this picture? Your gray-haired, kind, lovable American mother...sitting at home, knitting for the Red Cross and baking apple pie! Soldier, you've got a dirty mind!

SOLDIER: But, Sir! That pin-up picture is my mother!

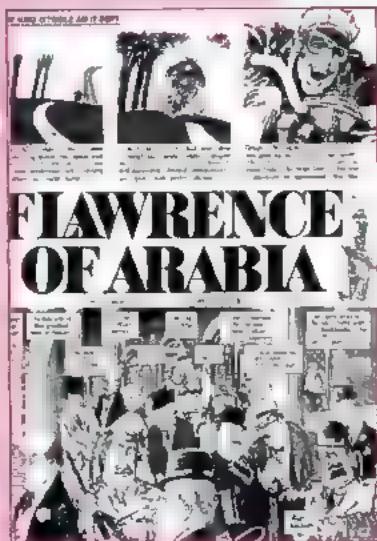
PATTON: Soldier...you've got a dirty mother!

throwing an Obnoxious Party in his office on West 53rd Street. Throughout the year, he built up a list of people he considered pests, bores, moochers, and hangers-on, then invited them all to his fete. Being what they were, the chosen hundred accepted immediately and with great enthusiasm, not knowing, of course, Gore's motives.

"There'll be food and drink and lots of contacts, lots of important people for you to meet," he told them.

Each guest was greeted at the door by Gore, wearing a tuxedo two sizes too large, and was presented with a badge, on which was printed, "Big Shot Photographer," "High-Class Model," "Big-Time Actor," "Star of the Future," and other fitting appellations.

To add a festive touch, Gore draped his rooms with toilet-paper bunting.



But his major efforts went into the preparation of the food. Guests had their choice of *hors-d'oeuvres*, most of which were canapés. The dictionary definition of a canapé is "an appetizer consisting of a piece of bread or toast or a cracker topped with caviar, anchovy, or other savory food." Gore's canapés did not quite fit

A ticket from the opening night of *The MAD Show*, January 9, 1966.

Webster's description. One offering consisted of grape jelly and pencil shavings. Others were made up of shredded bubble gum with peanut butter, and strawberry jam with Chinese mustard. "The cream cheese with cigarette tobacco went over very big," he recalls.

To quench the thirst of his guests, Gore bought a case of the cheapest grape soda pop, opened up the bottles a week beforehand, and let them stand. At the party he wrapped each bottle in a white napkin and served the beverage as wine in appropriate stemmed glasses.

One guest looked over the assortment of canapés and found none to his liking. He departed, then returned with some liverwurst sandwiches from a nearby delicatessen. Gore acted outraged. "I'm deeply hurt," he told the guest. "I've gone to all this expense and you insult me

Stan Hart, who with Siegel co-authored the off-Broadway revue, *The MAD Show*, has written several memorable TV satires for the magazine, including "Passion Place," a satire of "Peyton Place":

ALLISON: Mommy, Mommy - can I go out with Rodney?

CONSTANCE: Absolutely not! You're just a child! Go play with your dolls!

ALLISON: I can't!

CONSTANCE: Why not?

ALLISON: I had to send my Barbie Doll away! My Ken Doll got her into trouble!

Dick De Bartolo enjoys destroying Madison Avenue via articles that lampoon advertising. For instance, these blurbs from "Ads We Never Got To See":

"When You're Dying for a Cigarette...try a CAMEL"
"Tire Savings Galore at Firestone's BIG BLOWOUT SALE!"
"RCA Gives You the Best Color TV in the World - Color so Natural, we Guarantee It in Black and White!"



Arnie Kogen is at his best assailing the eccentricities of world-famous personalities. He introduced one of MAD's most successful features, "A Celebrity's Wallet," a potpourri of letters, memos, cards, etc., supposedly extracted from the billets of the famous. Among the items in Howard Hughes's wallet.

IDENTIFICATION

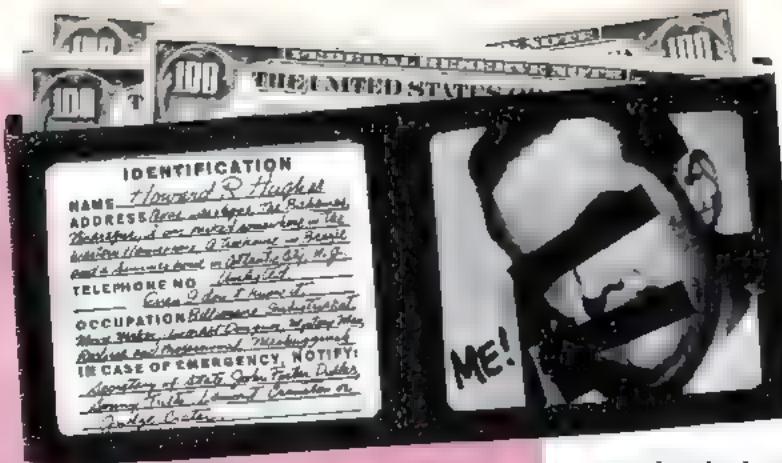
NAME: Howard R. Hughes

ADDRESS: Texas, Las Vegas, The Bahamas, Nicaragua, a car parked somewhere in the Western Hemisphere, a treehouse in Brazil, and a summer home in Atlantic City, N.J.

TELEPHONE NO. Unlisted Even I don't know it.

OCCUPATION: Billionaire, Industrialist, Movie Maker, Aircraft Designer, Mystery Man, Recluse, and Professional Meshugginah.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, NOTIFY: Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Sonny Tufts, Lamont Cranston, or Judge Crater.



Also, this memo from Hughes to a hotel in the Bahamas:

Gentlemen: Considering the rumors circulating for the past 16 years that I am dead and do not even exist, I can understand your desire to confirm my authenticity before closing the deal we made.

And so, to eliminate your doubts once and for all, I am enclosing a jar of my breath. You can examine it and compare it with my breath prints of 16 years ago.

I trust this will also put a stop to the rumors that I am eccentric and crazy.

Very truly yours, H.R. Hughes

by bringing your own sandwiches."

But generally, Gore was a perfect host. "Is everybody happy?" he would ask, threading his way through the crowd. "Is everybody having a good time? Fine, fine. I'm so thrilled."

Many of the guests came to make contacts. Gore took an especially offensive publicist by the arm and pointed to a short, unassuming man across the room. "See that fellow?" said Gore. "He's connected with all the top magazines — *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, all of them." The publicist rushed to light the cigar of the short man, roared at anything he said, and set up a luncheon date at The Four Seasons. It was true that the short man was connected with all the top magazines. He was Gore's corner newsdealer.

The finest touch was Gore's bathroom, a phonebooth-sized cubicle that was used (or supposed to be) by both sexes. He employed a

leather-jacketed teenager — "the toughest-looking kid I could find" — to serve as attendant, warning him that he wouldn't get paid unless he stayed in the bathroom faithfully throughout the entire party. Most of the guests would walk in the bathroom, see Gore's hoodlum standing there, then run across the street to use the facilities at the Museum of Modern Art.

Occasionally, the kid would storm out and complain to Gore that nobody was using the bathroom and that, consequently, he wasn't getting any tips. Of course, whenever the kid left his station, guests would race to the unattended bathroom.

"What do you mean, you're not getting any business!" Gore told the kid. "Look at them running to use the john. If you were sticking to your post, you'd be making a fortune in tips."

Gore threw his Obnoxious Parties for three successive years.

The first party cost him \$12.40. The second one cost him \$13.00. But the third one set him back \$16.00. Gore never held another.

"Sixteen dollars to feed

one hundred people! Does that seem fair? I had to give them up. Inflation bugged me."

Gore did not last long as MAD's public relations man, partly because he planted items in newspapers without first checking on their accuracy with Gaines. No, it wasn't true that Gaines paid his staff in two-dollar bills. No, it wasn't true that Gaines was planning to publish a waterproof MAD for skin-divers.

"I couldn't communicate with Gore," Gaines has said. "He was even madder than we are."

COMING UP NEXT!

We enjoy a close-up view of Gaines' personal pleasures, most notably his enormous appetite, his life-long romance with gourmet cooking and fine wine, and his failing attempts to lose weight. We then see Gaines at his desk as we detail his hands-on methods of publishing, based on his own rules and unlike those of any other executive.



Many of Bill's readers consider Frank Jacobs' *The Mad World of William Gaines* to be the definitive narrative of Bill Gaines' life and his EC empire. Scarce and long out of print, the book chronicles the Gaines era through 1972.

To help launch the new **MAIN** series, serializing this book over six consecutive **TL** issues.



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THE **MAD** WORLD OF **WILLIAM M. GAINES** Part IV BY FRANK JACOBS

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THE STORY SO FAR

Gaines horror comics have fallen victim to the repression of the McCarthy era. Nearly bankrupt, E.C. has rebounded, owing to the success of Harvey Kurtzman's comic-book MAD. After Kurtzman's controversial departure, Al Feldstein has taken over the new, slick MAD, and we've been introduced to the magazine's artists and writers, aka The Usual Gang of Idiots.

CHAPTER 10

GAINES THE INSATIABLE

My grandfather, who never had more than a few dollars to his name, always managed to eat well. He explained this freedom from want through a special expression: "My stomach will never know I am a poor man." With William M. Gaines, the situation is reversed: His stomach will always know he is a rich man.

Half gourmet, half glutton, Gaines courts food as a gigolo stalks spinsters. Eating is his life schtick, his grand passion, his past, present, and future thing. He belongs to six

wine and food societies and could, if he wished, attend three dinners or tastings a week. Lamentably — and this is the fly in the melba sauce — he can't because of his weight problem. His poundage fluctuates like an east Indian oil stock, ranging from a low of 185 to a high of 285.

Every year or so, he goes on a diet, the effect of which depends mostly on his willpower. Gaines has tried at least a dozen diets, among them the Stillman (high protein, low fat, low carbohydrate), the Rockefeller (no starch), the Pill (dexedrine), the Drunking Man's (low carbohydrate, high protein, high fat, high alcohol), and various combinations of the above. Recently, he tried the Rice (one bowl of boiled rice three times a day). He began it at 7:15 on a Friday evening and ended it five minutes later, at which point he went on the Gaines (eat whatever you want to eat until the next night).

The only diet that has been completely effective is the Metrecal (Metrecal). Embarking on it, he prepared a chart which predicted he would lose one hundred pounds in twenty-eight weeks. His prediction came true both to the pound and the day, which pleased him despite the sacrifices he had been forced to make.

"Each time I hit the Metrecal trail," he says, "it means giving up any kind of a social life for months. My social life is food. I can't go anywhere, I can't do anything, because the only thing I know how to do is eat."

Gaines wound up his first Metrecal diet at 185, a weight that he remained at for one day, after which he rewarded himself with a ten-day eating tour of France. At the end of the tour, in which he devoured delicacies in a dozen two and three-star restaurants, he found himself in Paris, still not quite fulfilled. It was



8
A well-ventilated Bill cooking meat on the balcony of his Manhattan apartment. We understand people from as far away as Cresco, PA complained about the view.



9
Fabulous MAD Dine. On the 1970 trip to Japan, the local cuisine is sampled by (l-r) Jack Albert, Al Jaffee, George Woodbridge, Bill Gaines, Dick DeCarlo, and Don Martin.



his last day in France and he had not sampled *choucroute*, and Alsatian version of pork and sauerkraut. That morning he roamed the city until he found a restaurant that served the dish. He ate a portion. Down the street he found another restaurant serving *choucroute*. He ate a portion. Farther down the street he found a third restaurant that served *choucroute*. He ate a portion. He then returned to his hotel, packed and went to the airport, where he had a lunch of Spaghetti Bolognese, then boarded his plane and ate dinner. During the trip, he put back on fifteen of the one hundred pounds he had lost; in the next two years he would regain the other eighty-five.

From the beginning of Gaines's life there was a kind of gastronomic destiny. A few days after he was born, doctors discovered that he was unable to absorb any nourishment because the opening between his stomach and intestine was too small. An emergency operation was performed and the opening was enlarged — cynics may say it was overly enlarged — and baby Bill was off and eating.

We don't want to say Bill Gaines was bushy, BUT... fabulous MAD babes Marla Wyche and Amy Vozelos can simultaneously fit into a pair of his old pajamas. Sorry, these pajamas are not for sale.

Gaines remembers nothing about his nursery years except for a nightmare he had when he was two or three. In the dream he was being chased downstairs by a giant Heinz pickle. Whether precognitive or not, the dream showed where his mind was. As a boy

his unit of wealth was the five-cent hot dog. Young Bill figured everything in terms of hot dogs. When he thought about going to a movie for a dime, he would ask himself: "Is this worth two hot dogs?"

Later he would use the same system to decide whether he should buy, say, a bicycle horn or a camera lens. Today, in his post-marriage years, he has discarded the hot dog as his unit of wealth and replaced it with caviar. Before spending fifty dollars on a date he will stop and think, "With fifty dollars I could buy five-eighths of a pound of fresh Beluga." He will then decide if the girl is worth it. Sometimes she isn't.

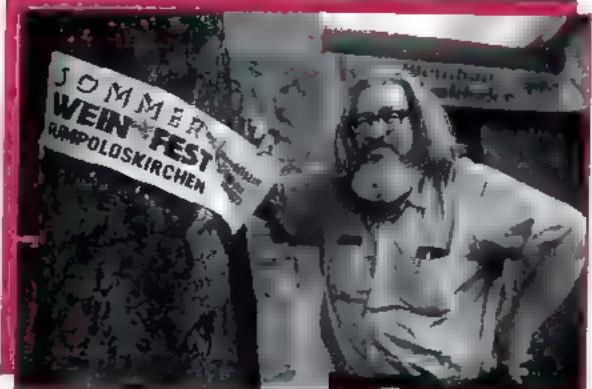
Gaines remembers himself as a fat kid. He wasn't, but his enormous appetite and his hatred of exercise created the myth in his mind that he was. The only sport young Bill liked was swimming. One summer, when he was twelve, his father tried to persuade him to swim across a lake, about a mile in distance. Bill refused. His father countered with an offer he was certain Bill could not refuse. "If you swim the lake," the elder Gaines said, "I'll let you eat a Welsh rabbit." Bill had never tasted Welsh rabbit; he wasn't even sure what it was. But the anticipatory tingling in his taste buds overcame his dislike of physical exertion. He swam the mile and reaped his reward, which he found well worth the ordeal.

Except for the family's lean years, which occurred when Bill was very young, he was fed by his mother with loving abundance. Occasionally, she would prepare two com-



PHOTO BY KELLY BISHOP



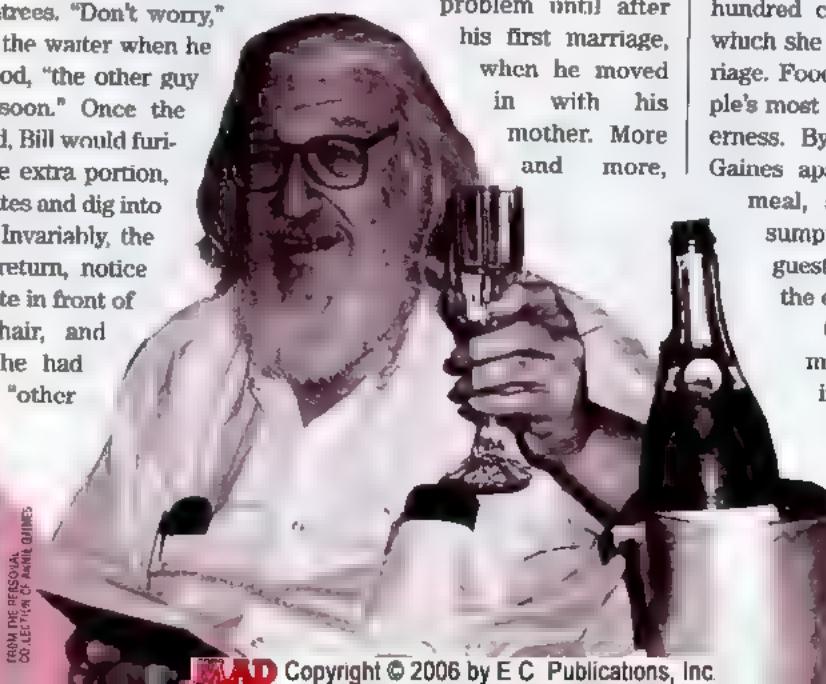


An ecstatic Bill at a 1975 Austrian wine festival.

plete Chef Boy-ar-dee spaghetti dinners, which, if one scanned the label, were enough to feed six people. In this case they were enough to feed two, namely Bill and his friend, Walter Kast, who together would eat the whole thing, with Bill generally taking two-thirds.

The kitchen in the Gaines house in Brooklyn was always open, making it a popular meeting place for Bill and his friends. "I'd go to other people's houses," he recalls, "and nobody fed me. I'd always thought that all mothers fed everybody."

Gaines is one of the fastest eaters in the world. Through his late teens and early twenties he and one of his friends would go to a restaurant and order three entrees. "Don't worry," Bill would tell the waiter when he brought the food, "the other guy will be here soon." Once the waiter departed, Bill would furiously down the extra portion, then switch plates and dig into his own meal. Invariably, the waiter would return, notice the cleaned plate in front of the vacant chair, and wonder how he had missed the "other guy."



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF ANNIE GAINES
© LEFT: FILM © ANNIE GAINES

During the first year in the Army, Gaines was given his choice of garbage detail or night KP. Naturally he chose KP because "that's where the food was." He spent a delightful five months devouring the delicious filet mignons that the

cooks had hidden away in the back of the refrigerator. It should be mentioned that he fried the filets to a crisp. This was done because Gaines has never been able to stand the sight of blood. Until recently he would request a steak "super overdone." Lyle Stuart recalls Gaines sending back steak as many as four times until it arrived in the desired blackened condition. Today, Gaines eats his steaks medium but is never quite comfortable doing so. "Deep down inside I am a vegetarian," he admits, "but I like meat. I prefer hamburger to steak because hamburger does not resemble flesh. When I cut a piece of steak I'm cutting flesh, and it disturbs me."

Gaines did not develop a weight problem until after his first marriage, when he moved in with his mother. More and more,

food became a symbol of security. He could not go to sleep at night unless he knew there was bread in the bread box and milk in the refrigerator. Even after he began dieting, his fear of empty shelves continued, except that the bread and milk were replaced by low-calorie soft drinks.

After his first two years in the business, his weight climbed to 240. It didn't help that the office was a block away from Patriss's, an Italian restaurant that served excellent pasta and delicious homemade bread. Gaines dined there daily, taking members of his staff with him. Al Feldstein remembers weighing 141 when he went to work for Gaines, 180 after a year of lunches at Patriss's.

But although Gaines's weight zoomed, there was a lack of direction to his eating. Put simply, it lacked class. He was a meat and potatoes man who knew what he liked and liked what he knew. Then, within a two-year period, two events took place which would completely change his outlook on the world of food and wine.

The first was his second marriage, in 1955. Nancy entered Gaines's life a good cook and left it a chef de cuisine, taking with her more than six hundred cookbooks, almost all of which she acquired during the marriage. Food was, probably, the couple's most dedicated area of togetherness. By 1960, a dinner at the Gaines apartment meant a lavish meal, superbly prepared and sumptuously served. A wise guest was one who had fasted the entire day.

George Dougherty remembers a dinner that included twelve courses, five wines, and cham-

Poetry in motion:
Bill enjoys champagne
during a luxury train
trip from Chicago to
Washington, D.C.

page. It began at eight. Five hours later, after a final cordial, he rose from his chair, having eaten more than he ever thought possible, and struggled out to the Gaines's penthouse terrace to take in a gasp of fresh air.

"They were eating orgies," says Nick Meglin, a veteran of several of the feasts. Meglin's wife, Lucille, once became sick between courses. She excused herself, came back ten minutes later and finished the meal. "Who could pass it up?" she says. Nancy's cooking was better than the cooking in any restaurant I've ever been in."

Arnie Kogen was especially impressed by the total hospitality extended by the Gaineses to their visitors. After one banquet he looked out a window and saw a fire raging through a building several blocks away. Kogen turned to his wife, Sue, and said, "Bill will do anything to entertain his guests."

The second event that changed Gaines's outlook on dining was a trip

he took to Haiti with Joe Orlando in 1957. The first night Gaines and Orlando were dining at the Picardie Restaurant. The subject of wine came up. Gaines said that he didn't want "any of that sour stuff," that he wanted "a sweet wine like Manischewitz." Orlando, who had been drinking Italian table wine since he was a youngster, got sick to his stomach, but agreed to let Gaines select the wine. Gaines could not find Manischewitz on the wine list — it is not a Haitian staple — so he picked a sweet vermouth to accompany their dinner of flaming lobster. Orlando got even more sick to his stomach.

The next night it was Orlando's turn and he selected a Beaujolais. Gaines tasted it. "It's bitter," he said. "Eat and keep drinking it," Orlando said. Gaines did and at the end of the meal was enjoying his Beaujolais very much. "You're right, Joe, and I'm wrong," he said, and with these words his life took on a new meaning.

FROM THE PERSONAL CO. EDITION OF ANN GAINES



"I worried that the wine vault he had installed in his New York apartment was so heavy it would crash into the apartment below — that's why he drank the wine as fast as he could."

Returning to New York, Gaines became a wine freak. He bought books by Frank Schoonmaker and William Massee and read them cover to cover. He took a three-month course in winemanship. He



IN 1977, LENNY BRENNER ASKED SERGIO ARAGONES TO DRAW A PICTURE ON THE FLIGHT BAG LENNY CARRIED ON ALL THE MAD TRIPS. SERGIO COMPILED BY DRAWING THIS COLLAGE OF WHAT HAPPENED ON EVERY MAD TRIP.



At another MAD dinner, Bill performs the balancing Coke bottle trick, then celebrates with lots and lots of food.



learned vintages and regions and found there was a world of difference between a Chambertin and a Gevry-Chambertin. New words seeped into his vocabulary—words like "bouquet" and "corky" and "over the hill" and "it needs to breathe."

And he bought wine. God, how he bought it. Burgundies and Bordeaux, Rhones and Rhines, Sauternes and Tokays. To hold them all, he had custom-built a beautiful combination wine rack and room divider for his den. But the wine started to deteriorate because the temperature in the den was 80 degrees. Gaines set a rule that no one could ever turn on the heat in the den. One winter evening his daughter Cathy, then age four, came to him with her teeth chattering. Gaines was torn between his daughter turning blue from the cold and his three hundred bottles of wine aging in the rack. He thought he solved the dilemma when he moved his bottles to the master bedroom and turned off the heat in there, but now Nancy was turning blue from the cold. Finally, he deposited the wine in a hall closet and installed an air conditioner that is kept running every day

of the year, keeping his bottles at a constant, convivial 60 degrees.

His most costly bottle is a Trockenbeerenauslese, for which he paid ninety dollars. Probably his most prized bottle is a Burgundy, a Romanee Conti '45, of which only about

open the bottle," Gaines says. "The bottle with the wine in it is the object of such romance, such unbelievable dreams to the average wino, that it's worth having just so another wino can come and look at it."

Gaines knew that he had arrived as a wine buff when he made the now-historic dinner that the New York Wine and Food Society held at Le Pavilion in 1972. It was, to all accounts, the most exclusive bring-your-own-bottle

party ever thrown. To get in, a member had to submit one or more wines and have them judged to be among the great rarities of the world. Only twenty-five members passed the test, among them Gaines, who shared with his peers three bottles of Musigny Blanc Comte de Vogue, the rarest of the white Burgundies.

Gaines's favorite story about wine is "Taste," a brilliant, often terrifying tale by Roald Dahl. For years, Gaines was intrigued by the story, which deals with a wine connoisseur who makes a spectacular bet that he can identify, through taste only, the vineyard and vintage of an obscure Bordeaux. After reading the story, Gaines determined to lay his hands

one thousand bottles were produced. The scarcity stems from the refusal of the Nazi invaders to give the vineyard the chemicals it required to get rid of a breed of plant louse that infested the rare pre-phylloxera vine. "I'll probably never



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF ANN GAINES

A jumbo meal on a jumbo jet: Bill enjoys caviar on a first-class flight to somewhere.



MAD in Africa: On a 1969 MAD trip, the Usual Gang and some locals pose at the Equator.

on a bottle of the wine, which was a Branaire-Ducru '34. After scouting wine auctions and browsing through countless shops, he finally found not one, but two, in a shop in Paris. He brought the wine home and wrote Dahl, who lives in England, that he wished to present him with one of the bottles. Dahl, who turned out to be a MAD subscriber, wrote back thanking Gaines and adding: "You may rest assured that nobody has ever offered me one of them before — not even the proprietors of the vineyard itself, although the story has been translated and published in France. I have never tasted it, but it is a good year, and it should keep for a while longer. I don't know when I shall be in New York again, but it must be sooner or later, and then I will call you and we can drink it together."

One day Gaines and Dahl will uncork their bottles of Branaire Decru '34. You can be sure that Gaines will save the label, as he has saved all of the labels from his most prized wines, pressing it between the pages of a book, not unlike a schoolgirl preserving a precious flower.

Gaines maintains a strong loyalty toward wine, and whenever he travels he samples the output of the country. The ultimate experience perhaps took place in Tanzania at the Ngorongoro Lodge during one of the MAD trips. Seated with three staffers, Gaines noticed a local red wine on

the lodge's list. He ordered a bottle and filled his companions' glasses. To the man they agreed the wine was terrible. Gaines refused to abandon it. Here, after all, was a wine — not a good wine, perhaps, but nevertheless a wine. "It's drinkable, I've tasted worse," he said. His companions disagreed and, one by one, left the table, leaving Gaines to finish the bottle by himself. Gaines sighed, poured the last of the wine into his glass, and drained it. Looking down, he discovered a very large, maroon-stained, wine-logged bug lying motionless at the bottom of the glass. Gaines almost lost his lunch. He pushed the glass aside and departed swiftly. His loyalty to the wine of the country had been severely shaken. However, in the midst of his emotional agony he thought of the bug and had one

(Continued on page 38)

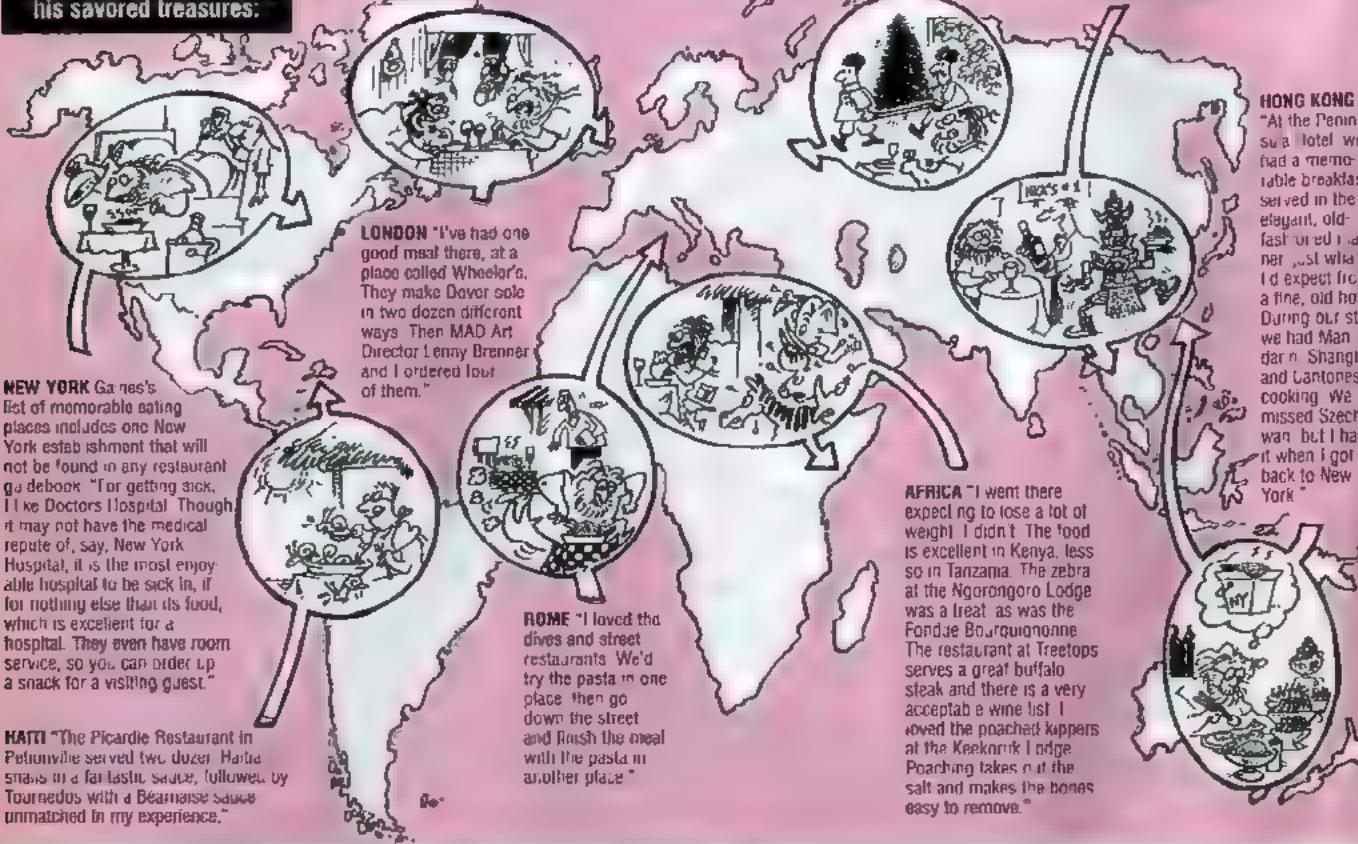
Bill Gaines (bottom)
finds relaxing nearly
impossible during
a MAD trip.



THE MAD WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES PART II

(Continued from page 19)

Some travelers take photographs. Others buy souvenirs. Gaines carries the memories of his trips in his taste buds. Among his savored treasures:



NEW YORK Gaines's list of memorable eating places includes one New York establishment that will not be found in any restaurant guidebook. "For getting sick, I like Doctors Hospital. Though it may not have the medical repute of, say, New York Hospital, it is the most enjoyable hospital to be sick in, if for nothing else than its food, which is excellent for a hospital. They even have room service, so you can order up a snack for a visiting guest."

HAITI "The Picardie Restaurant in Petionville served two dozen Haitian snails in a fantastic sauce, followed by Tournedos with a Bearnaise sauce unmatched in my experience."

RUSSIA "A bunch of us went to a restaurant but couldn't read the menu. I ordered all ten items on the menu, figuring that out of the ten there would be something everyone would like. The caviar was good, fresh Beluga. I had two large portions every lunch and dinner at a dollar sixty a portion. I had to eat it on bread. The Russians don't give you anything proper to eat caviar on, like blinis or blinis."

BANGKOK "Don't miss a place called Nick's Number One. Nick is a simple Hungarian who makes a delightful Spaghetti Carbonara. He also happened to have a Tokay Aszu, 5 puttonyos, which is one of the world's fine wines, and a very decent Eger Bikaver (Bull's Blood)."

HONG KONG "At the Peninsula Hotel we had a memorable breakfast served in the elegant, old-fashioned manner just what I'd expect from a fine, old hotel. During our stay we had Mandarin, Shanghai and Cantonese cooking. We missed Szechuan, but I had it when I got back to New York."

ROME "I loved the dives and street restaurants. We'd try the pasta in one place, then go down the street and finish the meal with the pasta in another place."

AFRICA "I went there expecting to lose a lot of weight. I didn't. The food is excellent in Kenya, less so in Tanzania. The zebra at the Ngorongoro Lodge was a treat as was the Fondue Boar quononone. The restaurant at Treetops serves a great buffalo steak and there is a very acceptable wine list. I loved the poached kippers at the Kekamuk Lodge. Poaching takes out the salt and makes the bones easy to remove."

cheering thought. It was, he decided, a beautiful way to die.

In restaurants, Gaines is an accepting patron who rarely causes a scene. There have been exceptions. One evening he and Nancy dined at the Asti, a restaurant that features opera singers. Gaines had just begun his main course when a tenor and a soprano, standing at opposite sides of the room, took up a full-voiced duet. Gaines can't stand opera, much less while he is eating. He rose from his table, left his wife, and carried his plate into

the kitchen, where he finished his meal in relative peace and quiet.

He did not leave a large tip that night. His method of tipping is unusual but consistent. If he is in a restaurant he does not intend to patronize again, his tip will be standard. If he is in a restaurant he knows he will patronize again, he will overtip. As he once told Orlando, "What one takes from Peter, whom he won't see again, one gives to Paul, whom you will."

Four times a year, Gaines attends a dinner for the Lucullus Circle, an

eating society that limits its membership to fifty and is very expensive to belong to. Each banquet, a black-tie affair, features seven courses and fifteen or so wines and liqueurs. After each Lucullus dinner, the chef is called in to hear a critique by one of the members. The night Gaines took me as a guest, the reaction by the diners to the cuisine was mixed.

"Shall we leave now?" Gaines asked me somewhat hopefully. "I think I'd like to hear the critique," I said. Gaines sighed and agreed to stay. It was obvious that he cared little about the critique, that once the food and wine were gone, he

**Gaines is easy to please,
just so long as there is enough
of everything.**

should be, too.

Gaines likes to take MAD people to the Lurillus affairs, if only to be amused. When Dick DeBartolo was a guest, he surveyed the elegant scene, scanned the extravagantly printed 12-by-16 inch menu and said, "Hey, Gaines, one night why don't we come up here early and stack a bunch of Chicken delight cartons outside the door to the dining room?"

Gaines is easy to please, just so long as there is enough of everything. John Putnam, a non-domesticated sort who possesses a limited knowledge of cooking, invited Gaines to dinner. Putnam decided that steak would be a sensible main course. He went to his butcher and said, "I'm having my boss over for dinner. Give me the best steak for two you have. Price is no object." The butcher picked out a huge chateaubriand and wrapped it. Putnam then pointed to the meat case and told the butcher, "Now wrap up that little shell steak. That'll be for me."

On the MAD trips, Gaines's most constant companion used to be Orlando, but after Orlando stopped drawing for the magazine, Leonard Brenner stepped in. In distant lands Gaines and The Beard are united by their love of food. In Kyoto, they and four other MADmen went looking for a new restaurant. Gaines and

ILLUSTRATION BY JACK RICHARD



Brenner selected a small eatery specializing in sushi, the Japanese raw fish delicacy. The other four decided on a restaurant next door. After Gaines and Brenner finished their several portions of sushi, they found the others next door, crouching unhappily before a sukiyaki-like dish called shabu-shabu. The four did not want the shabu-shabu, which was difficult to communicate, since neither they nor the restaurant staff spoke each other's language. Gaines solved the problem. He sent the four on their way, after which he and Brenner, to the absolute astonishment of the waiters, sat down and devoured the shabu-shabu.

CHAPTER 11

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Contrary to the size of his person, appetite, and bankroll, William M. Gaines thinks small — at least as publisher of MAD. He has sat by and watched the great magazines, *Colliers*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Look*, fall by the wayside. He has beheld the house that Luce built scrambling to hold on for dear life. He has seen Hugh Hefner rise and fall with *Trump* and *Show Business Illustrated*, then parlay *Playboy* into a far-flung realm of clubs and hotels.

Years after the *Trump* affair, Hefner asked Gaines, "What new projects are you planning?"

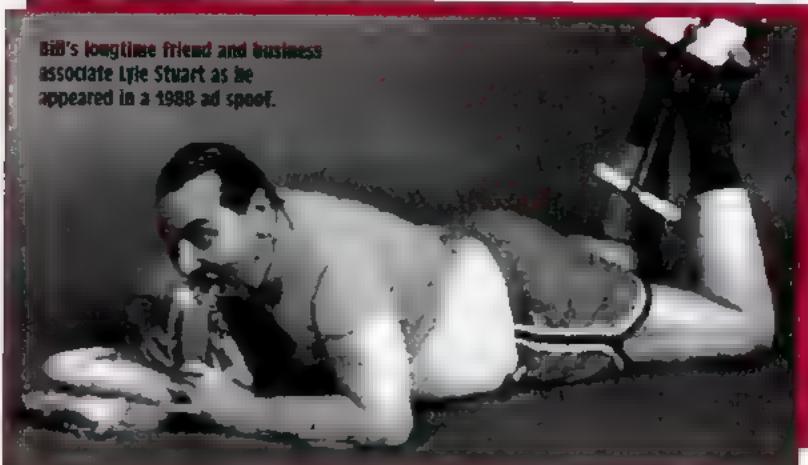
"None," Gaines said.

"None?" Hefner asked incredulously.

"It was like I was guilty of blasphemery," Gaines said later.

What one must realize is that Gaines is terrified of getting involved in an operation too big for him to handle personally. Therein lieth man, he feels, not for Hefner, perhaps, but assuredly for

Bill's longtime friend and business associate Lyle Stuart as he appeared in a 1988 ad spoof.



himself

Gaines began thinking small when he took over the business end of MAD. He'd built up an empire with his horror comics and had blown the profits like a heedless dilettante. With MAD he'd be satisfied with a modest kingdom.

Back in 1956, you'll remember, he was deep in debt from his distributor, Leader News, going bankrupt. He was also in analysis, having finally given in to the appeals of Sheldon Mayer and Lyle Stuart.

"Bill was a virtual snakepit of neurotic problems, even during his early years of success," recalls Stuart. "He couldn't live with good fortune. He told me that when he stopped his Cadillac at a red light, he was convinced that the people waiting at the bus stop hated him."

The sessions had begun in 1954, when the horror empire was crumbling. The analyst wanted Gaines to come in five days a week, but Gaines held out for four, it being part of his nature never to go all out for anything. Like many men of the couch, the doctor billed Gaines whether or not Gaines showed up. This was irksome, especially at vacation times.

"Since I have to pay you when I'm out of town," Gaines declared, prior to leaving on a trip to Haiti, "I want you to come into this office every morning

and think about me for forty-five minutes."

"Are you getting anything out of it?" his sister Elaine

asked, when he was midway through his sessions.

"If nothing else, I don't feel guilty about things I do any more," Gaines told her. "I can go ahead and do them and not feel rotten."

"Did you get anything out of it?" I asked him, long after the sessions ended.

"For six years I neatly avoided ever saying anything that would let my analyst help me," he answered, "but,

then, he never said anything to me, either — except for seven words that changed my life."

The help came when Gaines needed it most, just after Leader News went bankrupt. Gaines lay on the couch and poured out the whole sorry tale — that he owed George Dougherty, his printing representative, about \$110,000 and that the only honorable thing to do was to dip into his inheritance and pay Dougherty off, then close down MAD.

The analyst stopped scribbling in his notebook and said what turned out to be the seven magic words.

"Why are you worrying about George Dougherty?"

Boom! The words hit home. What they meant, of course, was that Gaines should start worrying about himself. So he started. He met with Dougherty and proposed a plan whereby MAD would continue, with Dougherty getting two thirds of the profits until the debt was paid off. Dougherty agreed, the debt was squared in less than a year, and the two men have worked together ever

since

However, the problem remained of finding a new national distributor for MAD. There are about a dozen of these distributors, each of which deals with some seven hundred wholesalers around the country. Gaines chose Ace News. The choice did not sit well with many of the seven hundred wholesalers, who were stuck with thousands of unsold MADs. Ordinarily, they would have returned them for payment to Leader News, but Leader was dead. The wholesalers told Ace News they wouldn't handle MAD unless Gaines made good on the returns, which meant paying them thousands of dollars. Bad luck, Gaines, or was it?

Gaines refused — it was Leader's debt, not his — and went to American News, which was the only national distributor that had its own set of wholesalers and newsstands. The contract terms were generous and Gaines was pleased. Leader News had been a fourth-rate distributor; with American News he was going first-class.

In less than a year, American News boosted MAD's circulation from 300,000 to half a million. Good luck, Gaines, or was it? After distributing seven issues, American News announced it was dropping the distribution end of its business. Bad luck, Gaines, or was it?

"Try Independent News," George Dougherty said.

"I can't," Gaines said "they're part of National, and that's Jack Liebowitz's outfit. Liebowitz helped buy out my father, and you know what a bitter fight they had. What's more, Liebowitz hates my guts because he thinks I ruined the comic industry with my horror stuff."

Dougherty pointed out that MAD was looked on with growing esteem by the publishing establishment.

"Go to Independent News. They'll want you."



AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE PUBLISHER



Dear MAD Reader:

Over the past few years, the cost of producing MAD has risen dramatically. Ink, paper, printing and shipping prices all have gone up. (In fact, just about everything connected with MAD has gone up, with the exception of the quality of the magazine!)

In order to avoid raising the price of MAD, I'm trying something in this issue that I swore I never would — running ads. I'm not happy about this, but I am trying to make the best of the situation out of respect to you, the reader.

Accordingly I have established a Blue-Ribbon panel of experts who will carefully screen all companies who wish to advertise in MAD. In addition, every product advertised will be carefully reviewed and tested by this panel. You have my personal guarantee that only top-of-the-line companies and their products will appear in the pages of MAD. My foremost concern is that you, the reader are satisfied. The "MAD Merchandise Mart" appears on pages 22 and 23 of this issue. Read the ads, judge for yourself, and let me know what you think!

If the response to advertising is good, we will try it again in future issues. If not, we will not use ads again and will maintain our "cheap" price as long as possible. Unfortunately, the low quality of the magazine will remain the same, no matter what you say!


William M. Gaines

Gaines trotted over. They did want him.

"They gave me the nicest, cleanest contract you'll ever see," he says, "and nothing in the past was ever mentioned."

Good luck, Gaines, and this time it really was. MAD's circulation zoomed in three years to one million and has been climbing ever since. In 1972, sales hovered just under two million.

Independent News helped Gaines in another way. Liebowitz was a tough businessman, which meant that Gaines constantly had to be on his toes. The first time the two men met, Gaines was vaguely perplexed

They're Available in Dozens of Shapes!
They're Available in Dozens of Colors!
They're Legal in Dozens of States!
They're Responsible for Dozens of Injuries and Deaths!

FIREWORKS

FIRECRACKERS! ROMAN CANDLES!
ASHCANS! SPARKLERS!
plus HAND GRENADES! LAND MINES! TORPEDOES! EXOCET & PERSHING MISSILES! NUCLEAR WARHEADS & more!
For FREE CATALOG, send an unmarked two dollar bill (Just to cover postage, of course) to T.M.T. FIREWORKS, 11 Sparader Lane, Topeka, Kansas 66614

Readers opened MAD #275 and found this "Important Announcement" from Bill Gaines. It was a bogus set-up for a collection of silly fake ads by Dick DeBartolo, but many still thought it was real and wrote in to protest ads in MAD. Dick's complete article appears on page 50 of this issue.

by Liebowitz's face. After a while, he realized that Liebowitz was a near double for Jerome Cowan, the Hollywood character actor, who was cast often as an underworld mouthpiece or a slick-talking entrepreneur. The similarity made Gaines feel uneasy, which, he soon learned, was ridiculous. Liebowitz was a thoroughly honorable, if determined, adversary at the conference table.

Once Gaines conquered this mirage, he and Liebowitz settled down to more than a dozen years of hard bargaining over contract revisions and other disputes. More than anything else, the jaw-to-jaw encounters transformed Gaines into a seasoned haggler. After Liebowitz retired, Gaines experienced a feeling of loss. He realized that through the years a bond of respect and affection had been formed, something like the gruff mutual admiration of two heavyweight wrestlers battling to a draw.

"Independent News has pushed MAD like crazy," he has said, "but their success shouldn't really sur-

prise anyone. After all, they've had the most pushable product published since the end of World War II.

This is the remark of a confident man, which Gaines, tested by his fights with Liebowitz, has surely become. He still is stirred by many of his old fears and compulsions, but has channeled them constructively and is now, says Lyle Stuart, "the exact opposite of what he was, emerging as an astute negotiator who possesses the right instincts for a publisher."

Yes, Gaines has thought small and has wound up quite rich. The MAD operation has changed hardly at all. The magazine still contains forty-eight pages printed in black-and-white on uncoated paper. There are no frills, no three-hour, expense-account lunches, no feudal chain of command. People ask why MAD accepts no advertising. Says Gaines:

"We'd have to improve our package. Most advertisers want to appear in a magazine that's loaded with color and has super-slick paper. So you find yourself being pushed into producing a more expensive pack-

MAD — Sept. 1979
Volume 1 No. 209
Publications, Inc. 485 MADison Avenue.
Subscription in U.S.A., 15 issues \$9.00 Our
become effective, and include mailing label
Entire contents copyright 1979 by E. C. P.
Publisher and Editors will not be responsible for
by a stamped self-addressed return envelope
fictitious. A similarity without satiric purpose t

age. You get bigger and fancier and attract advertisers. Then you find you're losing some of your advertisers. Your readers still expect the fancy package, so you keep putting it out.





MAD's foreign editions have sometimes printed articles that infuriated Bill Gaines.

but now you don't have your advertising income, which is why you got fancier in the first place — and now you're sunk."

Like every other magazine, MAD is numbered consecutively. Unlike most every magazine, MAD is approaching its 160th issue and is still in Volume One.

"We'll never have a Volume Two," Gaines says proudly. "Should the Post Office complain that our Volume One is going on forever, I'll simply tell them it's not true, that I intend to start Volume Two after the one thousandth issue."

MAD is dated two months ahead. This is a holdover from the comic book days when newsdealers would

pull off any comic that looked the slightest bit dated. Gaines has calculated a system where-

by no issue is on sale during the month printed on its cover. An October issue, for instance, will go on sale August 5 and be removed September 20.

The magazine enjoys its best sales in the summer, followed by the spring and winter. The worst sales are during back-to-school time, when, as Gaines mysteriously puts it, "Kids are too busy to read."

MAD is ninety-five percent newsstand sales, the rest subscriptions. Gaines makes no effort to push subscriptions ("My girls can just handle what they've got now"), in fact, barely makes it worthwhile for a reader to subscribe. A pitch in a recent issue offered nineteen issues for seven dollars, which comes to a saving of less than four cents an issue.

Gaines has managed to achieve growth without really growing. Three times a year he published MAD Specials, containing eighty pages of mostly reprinted material plus a bonus, such as a giant poster, or a construct-it-yourself MAD Mobile, or a hangable MAD Calendar.

Then there are MAD's paperbacks, eight published per year, some containing reprinted material, some completely original. As of this writing, there were close to sixty of them, all in print. In addition, MAD is translated into seven languages — Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Dutch, Italian, German and British. Yes, British — "dollars" become "pounds" or "quid," "garbage-man" becomes "dustman," etc.

Neither the paperbacks nor the foreign editions are published by Gaines, who lacks the time and the

Longtime MAD cover artist Norman Mingo and some of the paperbacks for which he painted covers.

facilities to market them, but he still regards them as part of his flock.

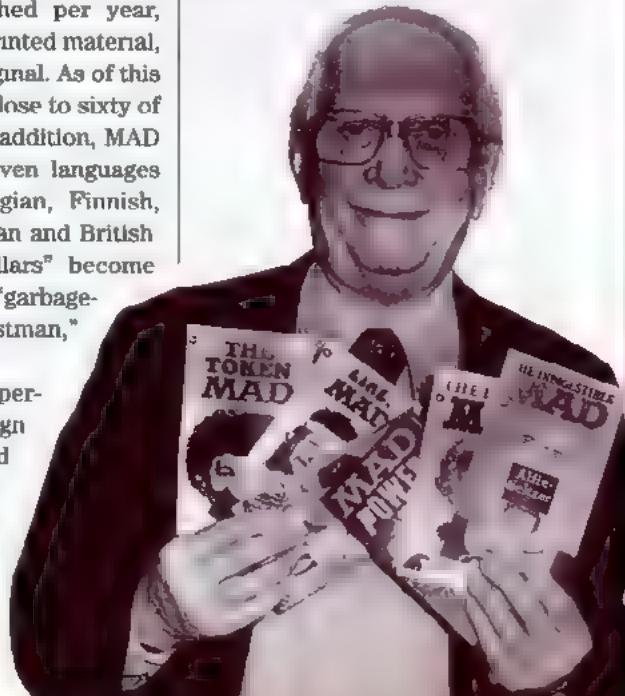
One day, John Putnam peeked into Gaines's office.

"Hey, Bill," he said, "I've a great idea for an ad parody. It's built around these three guys in a men's room. Two of them are standing at urinals and the third is peeking over their shoulders."

Gaines waved Putnam away. "Get out of here with your nutty, radical ideas."

"It's not my idea," Putnam said, throwing a magazine on Gaines's desk. "It's right here in your Dutch edition."

Gaines was infuriated. MAD has rarely resorted to outhouse humor and never overtly. The Dutch editors had added the offending pages on their own. Gaines has never minded that MAD's foreign editions contain an occasional home-grown item, but this one was intolerable. He sent off one of his typically dreadful, blistering letters to the Dutch publisher, informing him that nothing original can be put in MAD that is not in tune with the tone and morality of the American MAD. There has been no further trouble.



Not too long ago, a member of the Vietcong was captured with a copy of *Mad* hidden on his person. No one knows how the guerrilla got his copy or if it made him fight harder or made him want to surrender, but Gaines has no intention of bringing out a Vietnamese *Mad*. However in 1968, during the time of the uprising in Czechoslovakia, he wrote Alexander Dubcek:

*Please allow me to introduce myself. I am William M. Gaines, and I publish *Mad*, the leading satirical publication in the United States.*

I have been watching, as has the rest of the world, the exciting events transpiring in Czechoslovakia. I am excited because I feel the only hope for any of us is some sort of co-existence between the Communist and Capitalistic systems, and the changes taking place in your country would appear to make such an eventuality more probable than ever before.

*Accordingly, I have a wild idea. One of the delights of democracy is the right of the people to make fun of themselves, of each other, of their leaders. I would like, as a gesture of friendship, to grant the right to a responsible Czech publisher — perhaps one of your courageous newspaper publishers — to publish *Mad* for a year, perhaps two years, without the payment of any royalty (the only expense would be a small sum to cover the photographic duplication of the art and script).*

We have much material which could be translated and used, but I would also suggest some original material dealing with Czechoslovakian life and problems.

If you are in any way interested, please answer at your convenience (and continued good fortune).

Gaines received no reply. He would have made nothing from the venture, indeed he nets little from any of his foreign editions. "I have only one big market and that's the United States," he says

Gaines has never met C. Northcote Parkinson or Dr. Laurence J. Peter, but these gentlemen would be delighted, I am sure, to know that Gaines applied their methods long before he read *Parkinson's Law* and *The Peter Principle*. Among the precepts of the Gaines Formula:

"Don't let your business expand to the point that you can't control it. Keep your staff intact and don't hire unnecessary people just because you're successful. Insist the people who work for you are efficient. Provide incentives, such as bonuses and trips. Increase salaries regularly, but not capriciously. Provide a quality product for your customers at a price they can afford. Do not gouge them with spin-off merchandise. Make everything — your people, your offices, your operation —



"Everything else is for fun."

Fun? Well, sort of, as long as the overseas publishers play by Gaines's rules. There was the time when the British operation wanted to sell a poster of Alfred E. Neuman for about a dollar. Gaines, who detests merchandising gimmicks that soak his readers, suggested the poster should be sold for no more than fifty cents. The British publisher argued there were many reasons for the higher price. Gaines gave grudging permission on the condition that he be allowed to see the poster before it was printed. The next thing he heard was that the posters were printed and being sold. Gaines screamed via airmail,

This is a perfect example of why it is difficult to do business with you. In our contract it is clearly indicated that we must have approval of the art layout and the lettering. Since you have already printed 4,000 posters, what are you going to do if we decide to disapprove of the posters, which we may very well decide to do?

The British publisher apologized, but the affair was a fait accompli. Two years later, Gaines wrote:

I note that we have received no money from you since the advance) for the thousands and thousands and thousands of posters you must have sold by this time. When you insisted on charging a dollar for the posters, you were quite sure it would be a smashing success, so surely we have some royalties coming.

The British reply was:

I only wish that we could tell you that we have sold thousands and thousands of the poster. I even wish we could tell you that we have sold hundreds and hundreds. Sorry to say, it has had a steady sale of two a week, and on a recent check-up I find that we have sold just under 500 copies.

just big enough for success, but no bigger. The result: Happiness? Why, for instance, does *MAD*, unlike any other magazine, come out every forty-five days, not monthly? Because Gaines believes his staff and he could not do their jobs efficiently if the magazine were published more frequently.

Al Feldstein would have liked Gaines to expand, to publish other titles. When Harvey Kurtzman's *Humbug* was faltering, Feldstein suggested that EC take it over.

"We'll let *Humbug* be esoteric. I'll keep *MAD* on a more basic level," Feldstein suggested.

They had lunch, Gaines, Feldstein, Kurtzman and Will Elder. Feldstein outlined his plan. Kurtzman, thinking there would be strings

attached, wanted no part of it. Gaines relaxed.

"I had a great feeling of relief when Harvey refused," he says.

Because of the way he works, any major acquisition, Gaines feels, would boost him to his Level of Incompetence.

"I do menial things that no executive in his right mind would do. By making my own deposits, writing all the checks, making all the payrolls, even serving as stockroom clerk, there's nothing that goes on that escapes me."

"It's easy getting in the habit of taking long lunches and socializing through the day
(Continued on page 70)



THE MAD WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES PART II

(Continued from page 43)

Somebody else is doing all the work, and you're just glancing at graphs and figures. And pretty soon you're not even doing that. So I run my business in this insane way in which I handle every single thing, down to almost the tiniest detail."

Is there another businessman in the country who constantly duns people about money he owes them?

"Being a compulsive, I must have my bills paid by the tenth of the month. If my suppliers don't send

ures did not agree with those of New American Library's computer. In each instance, Gaines's figures were accepted, his calculations being obviously more reliable than those of a computer.

Gaines distrusts computers, feeling they lead to the destruction of relationships. For months he was dunned for a bill he had paid. What made the matter meaningful is that he was being dunned by a company that makes, among other things, computers.

As a last resort, Gaines sent the firm a Photostat of his canceled check, along with the following:

Let's see how quickly you are going to pay my bill, which is enclosed, for my time, my secretary's time, and the company's expenses to send you this letter. The stamp is free. Please be advised that my attorney will dun you until you pay your G—damn bill.

(Gaines dictates his letters to his Girl Friday, Gloria Orlando. He shrinks from rating the importance of the people on his staff, but considers Gloria indispensable. "She is the only person who can open my safe," he explains.) Attached was an itemized bill for \$36.49.

Like most compulsives, Gaines is a listmaker. One day he and I made a list of his lists. There were twenty-three. Among them:

A list of the eighteen keys on his key chain and where duplicates can be found in case the keychain is lost.

A list of Major Worries and how they stand. Worries include Sales, Assets That Must Be Protected, Law suits, Magazines Competing With MAD, Criticism of MAD. As of

August, 1972, all Major Worries were marked "None. Okay."

A list of MAD trips and who went. A list of everyone who owns a MAD pin. A list of things to do Every Day, Every Week, Twice A Month, Every Month, Every Forty-five Days, Every Three Months, etc. A list of all subscriptions he has to other magazines and when they expire. A list of what clothes fit best at what weight. A list of pennies needed by Nick Meglin's daughter, Diane, to complete her collection.

Gaines is generally an unflappable employer. The one time he lost his perspective was when the old MAD offices on Lafayette Street were being burglarized. Someone — Gaines called him The Phantom — was breaking in and stealing cash and mail, and Gaines vowed to catch him. He hired two teenage boys to camp out in the office over a four-day Thanksgiving weekend. Sure enough, The Phantom showed up and stuck his hand through the mail slot of the front door in an attempt to steal some letters, which had been left as bait. But the boys chickened out and let him get away.

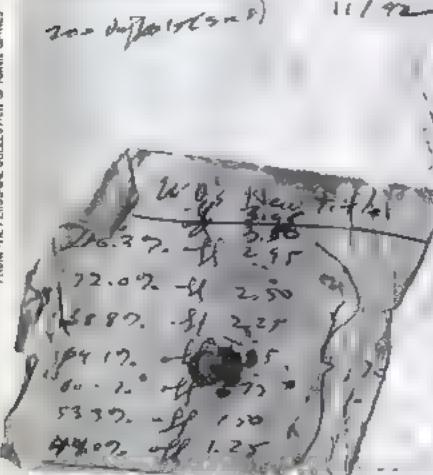
"I was hoping that they would grab his arm and smash it with a crowbar, which they had been equipped with," Gaines recalls.

The Phantom was wily. He hid in the building through the rest of the weekend, then, as a parting gesture, stole MAD's mail out of the postman's bag.



Gloria Orlando
was Bill's
trusted secretary
for 36 years.

200 ~~overhead~~ 1/22
200 ~~overhead~~ 4/12
200 ~~overhead~~ 4/12



Gaines kept many lists, but few could be read by others. We have no idea what this one is about.

me their bills on time, I get very angry and call them up and scream at them because they haven't billed me yet."

Gaines's methods have left their mark. For many years, MAD's paperbacks were published by New American Library. From time to time, Gaines found that his fig-

Gaines called in the police, then the F.B.I., then the Pinkerton Agency, all with no results. The ultimate blow came when The Phantom, unable to find cash, pried open a strongbox in Gaines's office, found a batch of papers and burned them in an empty office down the hall.

When Gaines beheld the charred remains, he cried for the first time since his father died. The Phantom had destroyed all of MAD's past sales records, dozens of Gaines's beloved lists, and more than 1,600 springboards left over from the horror days. The Phantom was hitting Gaines where it hurt the most. It was as if he knew his customer. Earlier, the Phantom had stolen Gaines's fake diamond ring. Looking back, Gaines feels that burning the papers may have been an act of revenge resulting from The Phantom finding out that the ring was virtually worthless.

Gaines became paranoid. He was convinced it was an inside job and that the culprit was John Putnam. He reached these conclusions because he had phoned everyone on the staff one night when The Phantom struck, and the only person not

very well until the next day, when he suffered a nervous collapse.

Gaines installed an electric protective system and although it kept The Phantom out, Gaines still felt the intruder's presence and in 1960 decided that MAD would have to move. But where? Gaines's first choice, not surprisingly, was the sixty-ninth floor of the Empire State Building, from where he could look out and conjure up World War I fighter planes flying around a giant ape. It was not meant to be. Celia Morelli, a mainstay of MAD's subscription department, has a fear of elevators, and the thought of being whisked up and down sixty-nine stories was imendurable. Gaines didn't wish to lose Celia, so he settled for 850 Third Avenue, then, in 1965, moved again to the present offices on Madison Avenue.

Gaines's figures were accepted, his calculations being obviously more reliable than those of a computer.

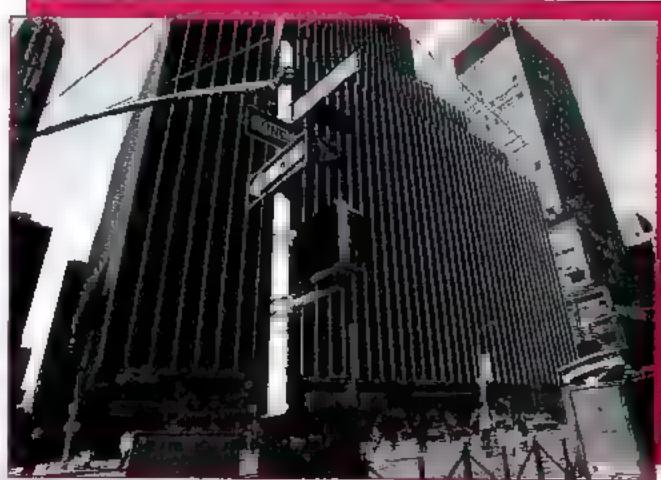
home was Putnam.

Yes, it had to be Putnam. But to be sure, Gaines put the staff through a Pinkerton lie-detector test. Everyone, including Putnam, passed the test and Gaines felt foolish. To make amends, he treated them all to a steak dinner, during which time he confessed to Putnam that he had been the prime suspect and that Gaines hoped all would be forgiven. Putnam took it

In 1961, Gaines sold MAD to a conglomerate called Premier Industries. He won't say how much he got, but *The Wall Street Journal* estimated the capital gains at "several million dollars." Skeptics wondered if MAD had sold out completely.

"We don't contemplate any changes in format or policy," said Premier's president, Arnold A. Saltzman.

As if he could have. Gaines was



Another scene of the crime: MAD's second headquarters at 850 Third Avenue.

staying on as publisher with full powers. Under his contract with Premier, he could still hire and fire, set salaries and fees, pay bonuses, take his crew on trips, in fact, do just about anything he did before. There was even a rumor that no one from Premier could step inside MAD's offices without an invitation.

Premier owned MAD for a brief spell, then, of all things, sold it to National Periodical Publications, which was the new name for the comic book house run by Jack Liebowitz. This was the very same firm that bought out Gaines's father two decades earlier.

"Everything that the Gaines family starts, National ends up buying," Gaines mused. The new owners weren't especially taken with the remark, but business was business, and MAD was very good business indeed.

In 1969, National (with MAD) was bought by the Kinney Corporation, which then acquired Warner Brothers, becoming a superconglomerate that produces movies, records and TV shows, runs banks and parking lots and publishes and distributes paperbacks, sheet music, specialty magazines and comic books.

MAD was a small organ in the body of a corporate giant.





and Gaines wondered if things would stay the same. He had received his final payment for the sale of MAD and, having refused a new contract, could quit or be fired at any time. He told his owners that he would stay as long as he was allowed to run EC without any interference.

He was left alone. He attended an occasional high level meeting or dinner and proved an affable, if somewhat improbable, participant. One time, during a discussion of Kinney stock, he remarked that he didn't own any. "I don't have any faith in this company," he said. "I only buy safe stocks."

The other executives were shocked, not realizing that Gaines was kidding. "I decided they were somewhat square," he recalls.

In truth, he was upset that he had not received Kinney stock options for himself and his salaried staff, which he had been promised by National several months earlier. Marc Iglesias, National's new president, said he would look into it. Gaines waited three months, then wrote Iglesias.

I HAVE JUST ABOUT REACHED THE END OF MY ROPE AS FAR AS THOSE ALLEGED STOCK OPTIONS ARE CONCERNED. IF THOSE STOCK OPTIONS ARE NOT IN MY HANDS BY FRIDAY, MAY 1ST, 1970, I STAY HOME.

May First arrived and Gaines had not received the stock options. He wrote Iglesias:

It's May First. Bye now!

Gaines went on strike. One may wonder, knowing his compulsion to clean up his calendar each day, how it was possible. It wasn't, at least on the first day. He spent May First at the office of his attorney, Jack Albert, where he worked as usual. The next day, exercising the greatest willpower, he forced himself to stay home. Late in the afternoon, he got a phone call from a corporate officer, who asked what the problem was.

"I want those options," Gaines said.

The officer promised that the options would arrive within three weeks. They didn't. Gaines phoned the officer. He was out of town. Gaines phoned Iglesias, who, in Gaines's words, "screamed at someone through his intercom, and, by God, I had the options the next morning."

But there was trouble in the wind, or at least Gaines had a gut feeling there was. He had picked up hints that Kinney was beginning to take a dim view of this maverick in their

midst, that MAD was the target of an economy drive, that there was talk of barring the MAD trips, of making Gaines get rid of his attorney, Jack Albert, and his accountant, Sidney Gwirtzman. MAD, it seemed, was the only member of the conglomerate that enjoyed self-rule.

It was a problem requiring special action, and Gaines took what he thought was the most sensible approach — he invited Iglesias to dinner and to hear a speech. Iglesias, who didn't know quite what to expect when he accepted Gaines's invitation, listened as his host dissected the unique creature that is MAD. The speech is a remarkable document, if for no other reason that it reveals a William M. Gaines far removed from the shaky, unskilled sub-adolescent who took over his father's business a quarter of a century earlier. Some excerpts:

"My office runs at peak efficiency always. Each employee is a top-notch, no-bulls—t worker. There is no fat, no waste, no crap, plus a great staff, and great freelances.

"If Kinney desires to kill and eat the goose that lays the golden egg just because it has a momentary cash shortage, that is its right as owner. But I refuse to be the cook.

"I believe it would be most foolish to force this oddly shaped MAD peg into the Kinney square hole. If you try, you'll crush it.

"I will not compromise with my insistence to run MAD my way completely. I feel I know best and your simple solution of the problem, if you disagree, is to fire me."

Gaines wanted Iglesias to see that MAD was more than a money-making component of a corporate giant, that it was a kind of wacky,

**God forbid that
anybody should ever expect
me to be reasonable.**

home-rule patriarchy, with its ruler the eccentric sum of its irreverent parts. To drive the point home, Gaines played a tape of one of the revues that was performed in his apartment for the MADmen and their wives. Iglesias listened to the songs and sketches, which touched on everyone at MAD, including Gaines's attorney and accountant. Afterwards, Iglesias turned to Gaines.

"You know, it's like you're some kind of crazy family."

"Exactly," Gaines agreed.

An armistice was reached. Gaines might never be entirely comfortable



within the corporate structure, nor the structure entirely comfortable with him. But there was peace.

Because he runs a tight little organization, Gaines is amused by the constant meetings, memos, and miscellaneous activities of his corporate parent. Soon it will be time for Gaines to take his Annual Corporate Health Examination. He intends to send The Beard in his place, Brenner being fond of physical examinations of any kind.

Two years ago, Gaines was asked to fill out a questionnaire for Kinney's Annual Report. After noting that most of the questions didn't

apply to MAD, he attached his own statement:

The MAD companies are wholly owned by Kinney, and are slowly acquiring Kinney stock. Our primary aim is to acquire all the Kinney stock, so that while Kinney owns the MAD companies, the MAD companies will also own Kinney. This will eliminate the need for officers and boards of directors. It will also save untold thousands of dollars now expended for coffee and donuts at the annual stockholders meetings, as there will no longer be any stockholders. Best of all, there will no longer be a need for annual reports.

Only once has Gaines felt completely boxed in by his owners. Back in 1969, Walgreen Drug Store refused to sell MAD after an outraged parent wrote the chain that Alfred E. Neuman and his pals were serving the Communist cause. Gaines wrote a five-page letter, dispelling the accusations and asking Walgreen to reconsider its decision. Walgreen refused and MAD was blackballed.

Twelve years later, Walgreen wanted MAD back in its stores. Gaines wanted to tell the chain to go to hell, but he couldn't because he no longer owned the magazine.

"The revenge would have been exquisitely sweet," he says, "but they came around six years too late."

Today the conglomerate is called Warner Communications. Warner also owns Independent News, which is MAD's distributor; Warner Books, which published MAD's paperbacks; and the various companies overseas that publish MAD's foreign editions. If any of you readers happens to be an anti-trust investigator for the Justice Department, don't get excited. Gaines revels in the writing of strong contracts, and no firms get tougher

treatment than his fellow conglomerates. Consider this phrase that he has rammed into any contract that requires he approve something.

The proprietor's (Gaines's) right to withhold consent shall be absolute and shall not be subject to any criterion of reasonableness.

"Most contracts," Gaines explains, "say that a person has the right not to approve something, but must be reasonable. God forbid that anybody should ever expect me to be reasonable."

Gaines demanded this clause in a book contract with another publisher. He got a call from the firm's lawyer.

"We've never had things like this in any of our contracts," the lawyer said.

"You never did a contract with me before," Gaines said.

"Well, I don't know if we're going to do one," the lawyer said.

"I don't give a damn if you do or don't," Gaines said.

The contract went through.

Contracts are the yardsticks by which Gaines measures men, companies, deeds, even life itself. He and George Dougherty periodically negotiate new printing contracts. Several years ago, Gaines was due to have his gallbladder taken out, but hadn't reached an agreement with Dougherty.

Dougherty got a call from Nancy. "Bill is on the way to the hospital and it's important that you meet him there."

Fearing that Gaines was dying, Dougherty rushed to the hospital. "What's happened?" he asked Gaines, who was lying in bed.

"George, I'm so glad you're here," Gaines said with the utmost gravity. "I don't want to have my gallbladder taken out unless you and I can agree on a contract."





This "life-size" Alfred E. Neuman poster was a bonus in 1965's 8th annual *More Trash From MAD*.

Thereupon the two men shook hands on a new pact based on their last discussion, and Gaines went under the knife contentedly.

"He's one of the two or three people I've met in my life who is thoroughly honest," Dougherty says. "He puts every thing up on the table where you can see it, and you either accept it or you don't. If you don't, you have to be prepared for him to walk away. There are no curves. Everything is direct."

MAD has given Dougherty the greatest challenges of his career. The magazine was the first to run a cover in fluorescent ink, the first to bind in a life size poster (Alfred E. Neuman, in two 32-by-64-inch sections).

"MAD," he says, "has forced the printing industry to pioneer."

Occupied as he is with the complexities of the business end, Gaines has little time for editorial problems. He helps choose MAD's front cover and what bonus gimmicks are going into the MAD Specials. Other than that, the editorial staff is on its own.

"Bill rarely asks that something be changed in the magazine," Al Feldstein says. "There have been maybe half a dozen changes in fifteen years. I have total freedom. He gave me MAD and stepped back."

Gaines doesn't see an issue until



MAD was the first magazine to use fluorescent ink on its cover.

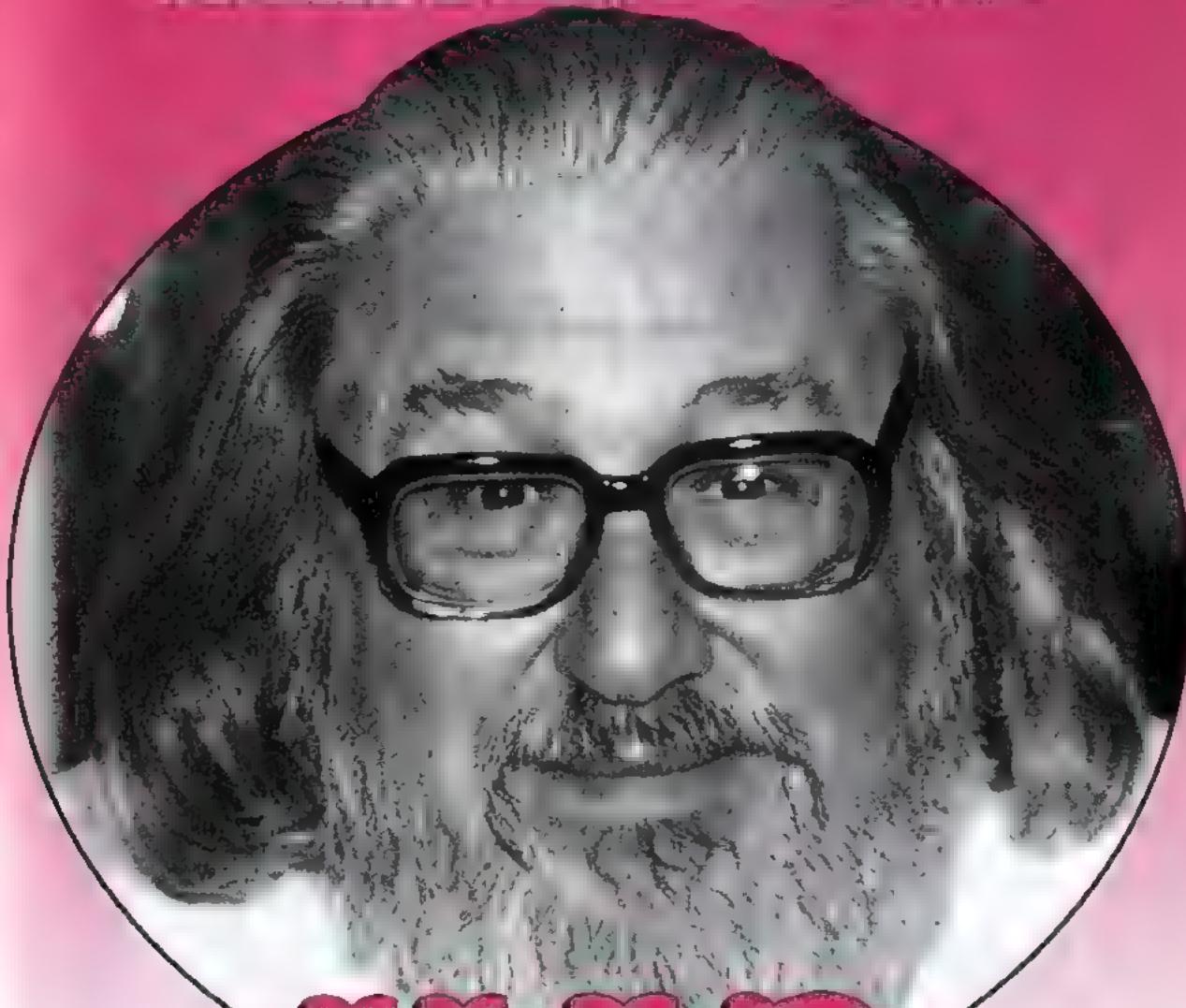
it's ready to go to the printer. Someone, usually John Putnam or The Beard, plops the forty-eight pages of text and art on his desk. Gaines prowls through each page, reading every line, devouring every picture, and pretty soon the air is shattered by a succession of roars, shrieks, guffaws, snorts, and gasps.

MAD is being read by its Number One fan.

COMING UP NEXT!

We commemorate some of MAD's most celebrated articles, including "43-Man Squamish" and "East Side Story," and sit in on an editorial conference. We cover the genesis and chronicle the fame of cover boy, Alfred E. Neuman. MAD's legal battles are detailed, most notably Gaines' \$1.5 million lawsuit in Oklahoma City (MAD had been labeled pre-Communist), and the landmark court decision brought about by MAD's song parodies.

THE MAD LIBRARY
1952-1953 1954-1955 1956-1957 1958-1959 1960-1961 1962-1963 1964-1965 1966-1967 1968-1969 1970-1971



THE **MAD** WORLD OF **WILLIAM M. GAINES** Part V

BY FRANK JACOBS

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THE STORY SO FAR

MAD has become a national institution and made Gaines a millionaire. We've witnessed his food and wine binges as well as his diets, all of short duration, that follow. Inside E.C., we've seen Gaines at work, defending MAD from corporate predators and running it with a compulsive, hands-on style unlike any other.

CHAPTER 12

43-MAN SQUAMISH AND OTHER IDIOCIES

In a 1965 issue, MAD introduced "a great new national pastime," 43-Man Squamish. Its inventor was writer Tom Koch, who outlined the rules of the game in detail:



A Squamish team consists of 43 players: The left and right Inside Grouches, the left and right Outside Grouches, four Deep Brooders, four Shallow Brooders, five Wicket Men, three offensive Niblings, four Quarter-Frummerts, two Half-Frummerts, one Full Frummert, two Overblats, two Underblats, nine

Back-Up Finks, two Leapers, and a Dummy.

Each player is equipped with a long hooked stick known as a Frullip. The Frullip is used to halt opposing players attempting to cross your goal line with the Pritz (ball). The official Pritz is 3 3/4 inches in diameter and is made of untreated ibex hide stuffed with bluejay feathers.

The defending right Outside Grouch signifies that he is ready to hurl the Pritz by shouting, "Mi Tio es inferno, pero la carretera es verde!" — a wise old Chilean proverb that means, "My uncle is sick, but the highway is green."

The other rules were equally absurd, and no one at MAD expected readers to take the game for any thing other than it was meant to be

a nutty takeoff of outdoor sports. The reaction was something else. At least five institutions of higher

learning formed 43-Man Squamish teams, among them Canada's University of Alberta, which informed MAD:

We happen to be the only undefeated Squamish team in Western Canada, mainly because we are the only team in Western Canada, and we haven't played a game. We can't understand why we have no opposition.

Teams were also formed at Marquette and at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and MAD continues to get requests for the official rules. As of this writing, the students at Baldwin-Wallace are working out plans to set up a 43-Man Squamish Hall of Fame in Berea, Ohio.

I would like to be able to report that articles in MAD have caused

international incidents. Regrettably, I cannot. However, there have been a couple of near misses.

In an article, "Comic Strip Characters Taken From Real Life," the editors and I came up with a mythical strip, "Bringing Up Bonnie Prince Charlie," featuring Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip, and their then eleven-year-old heir to the British throne:





A London tabloid saw the strip and reproduced Wally Wood's artwork beneath a blaring headline — "A STUPID INSULT." Apparently, the famed British appreciation of satire did not extend to swipes at the Royal Family. After the sequence was reprinted in a MAD paperback, it was necessary to rip out, by hand, the offending page in twenty-five thousand copies before the book could be distributed in Great Britain.

Another time, MAD ran an ad for the "Crime-of-the-Month Club," giving the club's address as "Mafia, Italy." This irked the Italian Government, which protested to the United States State Department, which sent a representative who asked MAD to refrain from using such references in the future.

The magazine has twice run afoul of the F.B.I., the first time after running an Al Meglin article on board games. One of the games was called "Draft Dodger" and offered players an official draft-dodger card by writing "to J. Edgar Hoover." After Hoover's office was deluged with mail, two clean-cut, most polite, most insistent F.B.I. men suggested that MAD strive to avoid adding to the bureau's internal problems.

The second visit from the F.B.I. occurred after MAD printed a three-dollar bill. This was not counterfeiting, of course, as there is no such item. The bill, however, was proving effective when inserted in money-changing machines in Las Vegas.

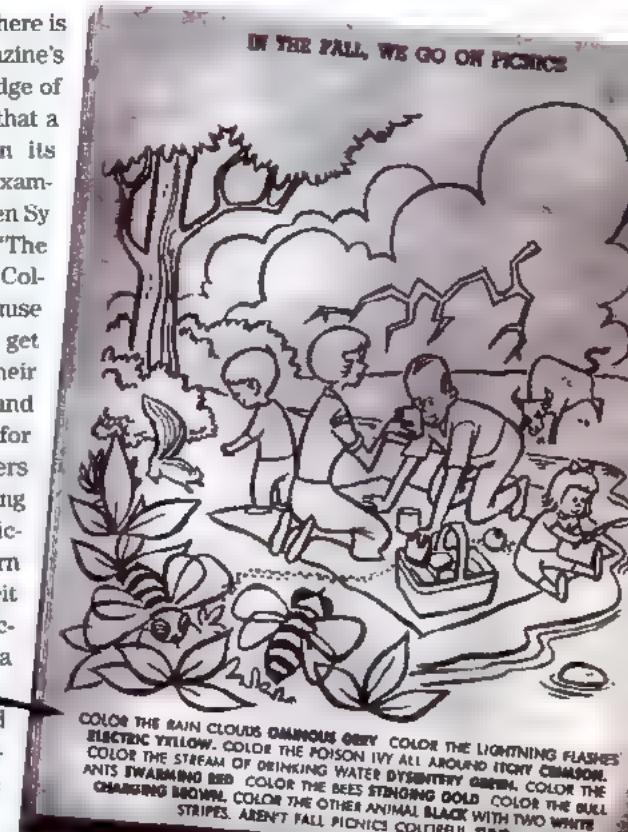
On the tombstone of every successful MAD writer should be chiseled the inscription: "He Knew the

Value of a Premise." If there is a secret to the magazine's appeal, it is the knowledge of its writers and editors that a good article hangs on its hook. A noteworthy example of this occurred when Sy Reit came up with "The MAD 'Down-To-Earth' Coloring Book." The premise was, simply, that kids get nothing from using their crayons on bunnies and dogs. To prepare them for adulthood, youngsters should be given coloring books that contain pictures of realistic modern life. On one page, Reit provided these instructions for a picture of a Family Picnic:

Reit's premise proved so captivating that within a year of his piece appearing in MAD, a dozen publishers had appropriated his idea and were making full-size adult coloring books of their own.

MAD has assaulted almost every area of modern life from practically every angle. One of the more popular targets has been the syndicated comic strip. In various articles, MAD has shown what would happen if comic characters —

1. Were psychoanalyzed.
2. Behaved like ordinary people.
3. Were as old as their strips.
4. Went nude.
5. Answered self-improvement ads.
6. Were the cast of an opera.
7. Went to an office Christmas party.



8. Had their own magazine.
9. Discussed current events.
10. Were killed off.

11. Had obituaries written about them.

Many of these premises have lampooned "Peanuts," bringing letters of protest from the strip's syndicate and letters of appreciation from Snoopy's creator, Charles Schulz. After seeing MAD's umpteenth twist on "Peanuts," Schulz wrote, "Why don't you guys take over the whole thing, and I'll quit?"

The second question people most



often ask me (after inquiring about Don Martin) is "Where do you get your ideas?" I've gotten about half of them myself. The other half have evolved from the more than one hundred script conferences I've had with Al Feldstein, Nick Meglin and Jerry DeFuccio.

To an outsider, a MAD script conference might seem paradoxical. Premises that may end up as hilarious spoofs are discussed with intentness and probing seriousness as can be seen from these excerpts, based on personal experience:

FELDSTEIN: Let me see if I've got this straight. You want to do an article on how celebrities' pets are influenced by the personality of their owners.

WRITER: That's right. For instance, Don Rickles would have an insulting parrot.

FELDSTEIN: Yeah, yeah. I get the idea. What do you think, Nick?

MEGLIN: It's kind of like the piece we did on love letters from celebrities. We did that fairly recently, didn't we?

DEFUCCIO: Issue number 150, to be exact. Amie Kogen wrote it. The mail response was favorable though not overwhelming.

FELDSTEIN: What other celebrities would you hit?

WRITER: Oh, you know. Betty Friedan would have a liberated cat. Joe Namath would have a horny hamster. Tiny Tim would have...

FELDSTEIN: God, not Tiny Tim again. We've done him to death.

The morning after Election Day, 1960, MAD became the first national magazine to bear a cover picture of President John F. Kennedy. This may seem remarkable, the cover having been printed some six weeks earlier, but there was madness to the method. The particular issue bore two "front covers" — a normal front cover plus an upside-down back cover that looked like a normal front cover. One cover congratulated JFK and proclaimed, "We were with you all the way, Jack!" The other congratulated Richard Nixon and declared, "We were

with you all the way, Dick!" It then was a simple matter for newsdealers to display the Kennedy cover, the issue being distributed the day after the election.

MAD first went political in late 1959 with a piece by Amie Kogen. At

the time, President Dwight Eisenhower was scheduled to meet with Nikita Khrushchev. Kogen proposed that for the wordy, noncommittal Eisenhower to be understood, he should take along special interpreters, such as James Cagney and Gary Cooper.

CAGNEY: Khrushchev says that Russia is more powerful, and is not afraid of America.

EISENHOWER: Well, that's a delicate problem, and, of course, no hasty decision should be made outside of the United Nations.

CAGNEY (pushing a grapefruit into Khrushchev's face): Ike says: "Shut ya big mouth, Fats! And show a little respect! Because any time you care to tangle with us, this is just a little sample of what you can expect, see!"

COOPER: Khrushchev wants to know if you agree that world disarmament is the most important problem we face today?

EISENHOWER: Well, let me put it this way...and that is not to say that official agreement is to be either inferred or implied...but if we are to look at the problem in its broadest sense, and take into consideration all of the inherent ramifications involved in solving such a complex problem...



Hedging our bet: MAD #60 picked the winner of the 1960 Presidential election (depending upon which side of the magazine you looked at).



Why don't
you come
off it.
Nikita?

I'll tell
you why:
I feel vicious,
Oh, so vicious,
I feel vicious, malicious and low!
How delicious!
Just to know that I am hated so!

I feel spiteful,
Oh, so spiteful.
I feel spiteful and frightfully sly!
How delightful!
When I think of how despised am I!

See the little world that we're living in:
How shall I destroy it today?

I will thump my shoe!
I will make a face!
I will start a war!
I will get my way!

I am scheming,
Oh, I'm screaming,
I am scheming and
screaming with glee!
I won't stop
Till the whole world is
Red just like me!

Sung to the tune of
"I Feel Pretty"

Mort Drucker art combined with U.N. photos and Frank Jacobs song parodies created a MAD classic: "East Side Story."

COOPER. Ike says: "Yup!"

MAD prides itself on protecting no sacred cows. Nonetheless, the magazine went extremely easy on John F. Kennedy, but, then, so did almost everyone else. Except for gags about touch football and the Kennedy bankroll, MAD trod gently. During one script session, the editors and I hit on a natural for a parody of *West Side Story*, which had just won an Academy Award for Best Picture. The piece would take place at the United Nations, with the two rival street gangs transformed into the forces of the free world and the Communist bloc. Mort Drucker outdid himself with his artwork, and Nick Meglin came up with the brilliant idea of superimposing Drucker's caricatures over actual photos of the U.N. The result was "East Side Story," and its featured players were the leaders of the world — JFK, Khrushchev, Harold Macmillan, Charles De Gaulle, Fidel Castro and U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson. In one sequence, Stevenson and his free-world buddies ask Khrushchev why he's trying to turn the U.N. into Red turf. Khrushchev sings his answer to the tune of "I Feel Pretty."

Soon the age of protest and Vietnam were on us, and MAD moved with the spirit of the times. During his first years in office, Lyndon Johnson reigned reasonably unmo-

lested. But beginning in 1967, his immunity ended. In a Max Brandel piece on protest buttons, he was pictured wearing one inscribed "War is Good Business — Invest Your Son." In another Brandel effort, MAD reproduced the widely seen photo of LBJ pulling up his shirt and pointing to his famous surgical scar. The difference was that Brandel turned Johnson's bared midriff into a map of Vietnam.

MAD paid scant attention to Richard Nixon during his first year in office. Since then, he has been dealt several hard body blows, as in this excerpt from "The Richard M. Nixon Presidential Primer" by Richard M. Nixon as told to Larry Siegel:

I want to make one thing perfectly clear. I have had it up to here with certain people! People who say I am two different men: An OLD Nixon and a NEW Nixon! I am just ONE Nixon! Just the other day, I said to my wife, Pat, "Thank God there is only one Nixon!"

And Pat agreed.

For about a year, Nixon served as the magazine's prime target, beating out Spino Agnew by a nose and Joe Namath, Timothy Leary and Tiny Tim by a length. Some of MAD's readers complained that one or two issues were oversaturated with Nixon material. The main objection was not that Nixon was

being slammed, but that others were being spared, and this ran counter to MAD's tradition of satirizing everyone, regardless of race, religion, age, politics, or place in the public eye. MAD, some said, was showing too much of one point of view.

It wasn't as if the magazine had been neglecting its other targets. In the same period, there had been at least a dozen articles taking off on hippies, extremists, junkies, the press, rock stars, and women's liberation. The problem was that in several pieces on Nixon, MAD had discarded its rapier and was using a bludgeon. Feldstein, who has an intuitive feeling when something is being overdone, realized what was happening. In his efforts to reflect the sentiments of the counterculture, he was committing satirical overkill. Within a few issues, balance returned. MAD still assailed everything and everyone (including the man in the White House), but with a fleshier, funnier, cleverer touch.

In 1962, Feldstein told *Newsweek*, "I suppose that God, mother, and country are supposed to be exempt from spoofing. But we've had some fun with country, and we've had some fun with mother."



ny held in his office. He would print the name of each new competitor on a small slip of paper, then take a wooded darning needle and stick the paper into a voodoo doll that he got in Haiti. It is probably the only religious rite he has ever observed.

MAD has had its admirers and detractors, but no one on the magazine knew quite what to make of *The MAD Morality, or The Ten Commandments Revisited*, an eighty-page paperback written by Dr. Vernard Eller, a professor of religion at La Verne College, California. Eller contended that MAD is a "subversive document pledged to decency and goodness" and that it fights the same evils warned about in the Ten Commandments:

MAD...sees, with the Ten Commandments, that there are many vaunted freedoms which in fact lead to slavery. The difference is that the Ten Commandments, upon seeing these, warn against them, while MAD makes fun of them.

Gaines allowed Eller to reproduce more than a hundred illustrations from the magazine and charged nothing. However, just in case anyone reading *The MAD Morality* might get the idea that MAD was some kind of missionary's guidebook, Gaines and Feldstein prefaced the book with this disclaimer:

The staff of MAD takes no responsibility for this book. We are happy doing our thing, namely cluttering up the newsstands and it doesn't particularly overjoy us to find an egg head type theologian trying to make something of it. Criticism we can take; praise from his kind could kill us.

We reject the insinuation that anything we print is moral, theological, nutritious, or good for you in any way, shape, or form. You can always read a genuine copy of MAD to help

take away the moral flavor of Eller's prettified version.

In truth, the staff reactions to the book were mixed. Jerry DeFuccio called it pontificating. Nick Meglin said, "it finally provides a source we can quote that says we have high standards, which we never knew existed until we read about them in Eller's book." John Putnam ignored the matter completely. Feldstein was uncomfortably pleased, feeling that linking MAD with any kind of religious experience could be

ethics, and he liked to think this is what Eller had in mind. As for the religion part of it, he was, of course, disgusted.

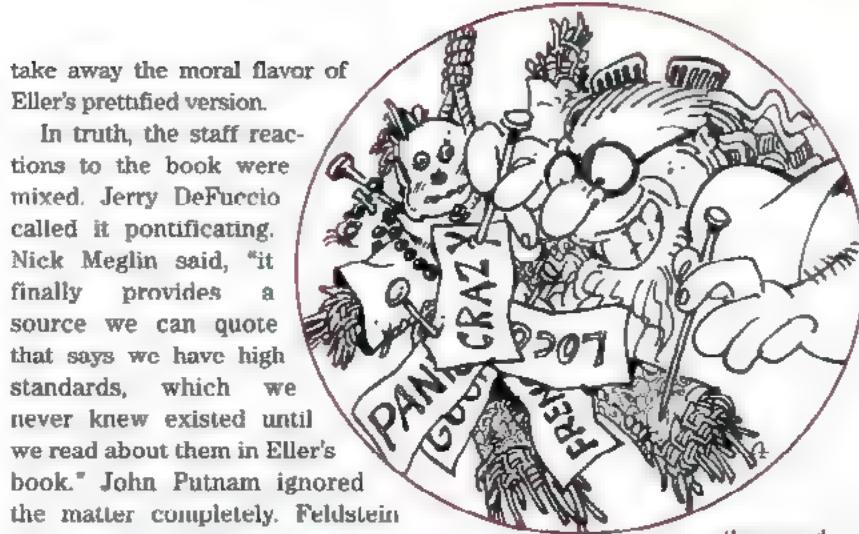
I asked Eller if he was aware of Gaines's atheism and how he reconciles it with *The MAD Morality*. Eller answered that

it was clear "that God loved Bill Gaines enough to give him a very good head, and even though he isn't using it to believe in God with, he is doing some great things with it. Far be it from me to encourage the proliferation of self-confessed atheists; but as long as we have them, I hope they are of Bill Gaines's type."

It was a far cry from the horror days when ministers in their pulpits denounced the evil purveyors of filth and scum who were rotting the minds of America's youth. One wondered how such praise would sit with the old-line EC fans, who remember the senate hearings with Gaines, the young Turk, holding up that cover with the bloody, severed head.

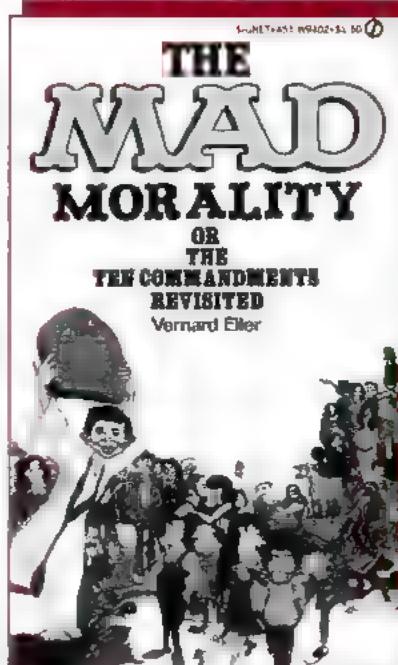
Gaines, if he weren't careful, was in danger of living down his reputation.

(Continued on page 70)



the kiss of death.

As for Gaines, he waxed ambivalent. First of all, he didn't like MAD being called moral; MAD did have



THE MAD WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES PART V

(Continued from page 19)

CHAPTER 13

THE NEUMAN CONQUEST

Newsweek wrote him up as "the jug-eared, gap-toothed MAD mascot." *Time* classed him as a "grinning urchin." *Look* called his expression "daffily Kiplingesque," and his presence a reminder of "the imperfectability of man." *The Saturday Evening Post* termed him "idiotic."

The personage the publications were describing is, of course, Alfred E. Neuman, MAD's cover boy, who has become a national symbol of absurdity. Placards bearing his picture were paraded during a Goldwater rally at the 1964 Republican Convention. His features were sculptured in ice at a Dartmouth Winter carnival. Cartoonist Mort Walker turned him into an imbecilic bird colonel in an episode of "Beetle Bailey." Fred Astaire wore a mask of his face during a TV special.

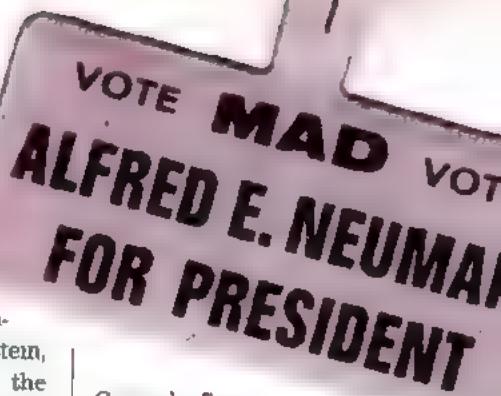
His fame was spread beyond America. A party of mountain climbers planted an Alfred E. Neuman flag at 28,000 feet in the Himalayas. A reader in Auckland, New Zealand, mailed a letter bearing nothing on its envelope but Neuman's picture. The correspondence reached its intended destination, the offices of MAD, with no reported difficulty.

The idiot kid, as he is referred to by MAD staffers, owes his place in history to two men — MAD's first editor Harvey Kurtzman, who found the face and picked the name, and the magazine's current editor, Al Feldstein,

who put the face and name together and made the idiot kid MAD's symbol.

Kurtzman first glimpsed the face in 1954, while visiting Bernard Shir-Cliff, the editor of Ballantine Books. Pinned on Shir-Cliff's bulletin board was a postcard picturing a grinning kid and captioned, "Me worry?"

"It was a face that didn't have a care in the world, except mischief," recalls Kurtzman, who appropriated it for the cover of *The MAD Reader*,



Gaines's first paperback

The name Alfred E. Neuman had its genesis on the Henry Morgan radio show. Morgan, searching for an innocuous name, landed on Alfred Newman, the conductor and composer. Alfred Newman became a running gag, a character who would make five-second appearances on the program, then vanish. Kurtzman latched on to the name. He liked it because it had the ring of nonentity. But Kurtzman misspelled the name and also, inadvertently, added the middle initial "E." In MAD, Alfred E. Neuman became the name for many different characters. His use even spread to other EC titles; Feldstein used the name as a pseudonym for several stories he wrote for Gaines's short-lived Adult Picto-Fiction magazines.

When Feldstein took over as MAD's editor, he decided to link forever Alfred E. Neuman and the face of the idiot kid. Feldstein told Gaines, "We'll put him on the cover and he'll be there from now on. He's going to represent MAD." So it was that Alfred E. Neuman, the "What — Me Worry?" boy, achieved immortality, making his debut as a 1956 write-in candidate for President on the cover of MAD #30.

Feldstein, his art staff denuded through Kurtzman's departure, was forced to place a want ad in *The New York Times* for a cover artist. The man who got the



An early postcard of the gap-toothed boy like the one that first caught the attention of Harvey Kurtzman.



Artist Norman Minge refined the gap-toothed boy's look into MAD's revered (or reviled) Alfred E. Neuman.

job was Norman Mingo, whose rendering of Neuman became the prototype for all subsequent issues.

Alfred E. Neuman has since graced every MAD cover but one. His face has been a carving on Mount Rushmore, a drunken stopper on a wine bottle, a half-finished num-

ber painting. He has become Uncle Sam on a recruiting poster ("Who Needs You?"), a flower child, a guru, an organ grinder leading a King-Kong-sized monkey. He has been portrayed historically on MAD posters as Toulouse Neuman, Alfred von Rictofen the Red Baron, President Abraham Neuman, and Alfred the Hun.

MAD published several of the comments along with the

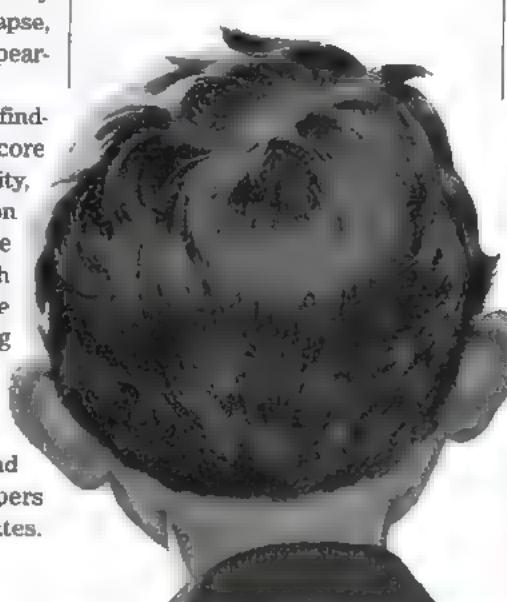
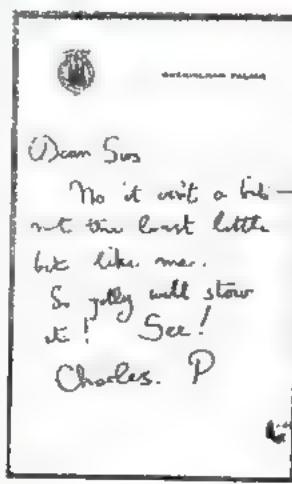
A party of mountain climbers planted an Alfred E. Neuman flag at 28,000 feet in the Himalayas.

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Some years back, Charles Winick, a psychologist, polled some four hundred readers of MAD. He found that Alfred was liked especially by low achievers. "Less successful students," Dr. Winick said, "are more likely to identify with Neuman because he conveys a feeling of failure, defeat, defensiveness, and uninvolvement. His non-worry slogan has a 'let the world collapse, I don't care' quality, and his appearance suggests stupidity."

Whatever the validity of his findings, Winick was right on one score — Alfred does suggest stupidity, which may lead to ill feeling on the part of a lad who is told he resembles MAD's mascot. Such a reaction occurred in 1958, the slighted youth apparently being England's Prince Charles. A photograph of the bonnie young heir to the throne, who was then nine years old, had been carried in newspapers throughout the United States.

photo on its letter page. A few weeks later arrived the following letter, postmarked London:



MAD



WHO NEEDS YOU

Did the letter really come from Prince Charles? John Putnam, who knows about such things, analyzed it. The handwriting was typical of a well educated nine-year-old. The stationery was triple cream-laid paper, bearing the copper-engraved crest of the Duke of Edinburgh, and would have been commercially impossible to duplicate. The signature, "Charles P." was eminently correct, the P standing for Princeps, which is how Charles would have likely signed his name. A contact at the British Consulate in New York City noted that the postmark revealed that the letter had been mailed within "a very short walking distance of Buckingham Palace."

Putnam weighed the evidence and pronounced that, barring someone having pilfered the royal family's stationery, the letter was authentic.

What is the source of the "What—Me Worry?" boy? When did he make his first appearance on postcards, posters and the like? MAD



An Alfred E. Neuman ancestor appears in an ad from the Topeka State Journal, September 24, 1910. Oddly, many have likened reading an issue of MAD to a painful dental appointment.

**DON'T GIGGLE
AT THE WORD
PAINLESS**

For This Boy Tells the Truth



**READ WHAT PATIENTS OF
Painless Romine
HAVE TO SAY OF HIS
PAINLESS
METHODS**

Topeka, Kan. Dear Doctor: I feel that it is my duty to inform you how well pleased I am with the dental work you did for me. I have been praising your painless method of extracting teeth to my friends. Will always speak words of praise in your behalf. Any use you can make of this letter will be perfectly agreeable with me. Wishing you the best of success. Yours respectfully, (Signed) Wm. B. DONNELLY, 1000 E. Sixth Ave.

All My Friends must recommend Painless Romine, and each and every one was pulled out the least particle of pain. His hood is something wonderful. MRS. LITTLE WATSON, Michigan Ave., Oakland, Kan. I remember when there must be some tire. There he some extraordinary systems or sense behind all such testimony. so positive that my method of filling and extracting teeth is absolutely painless that I agree to fill any number of teeth without pain or no pay. In other words:

**F IT HURTS
DON'T PAY**

U EVER HAVE A DENTIST BEFORE? thinking right now about your they need attention. I WANT TO BE HURT. call at once and consult me! le to only save you pain, but your hair you. da not.

once asked its readers to help out and was deluged with suggestions. The kid was used in 1915 to advertise a patent medicine; he was a newspaperman named Old Jack; he was taken from a biology textbook as an example of a person who lacked iodine; he was a testimonial on advertisements for painless dentistry; he was originated by comedian Garry Moore; he was a greeting-card alcoholic named Little Herman, he was a fictional moron named Hooey McManus. One reader even dug up a 1909 German calendar bearing a version of the inane smiling face.

By far the most pertinent correspondence came from a lawyer representing a Vermont woman named Helen Pratt Stuff. The woman claimed that her late husband, Harry Stuff, had created the grinning kid in 1914, naming him "The Original Optimist." Stuff's copyrighted drawing, she charged, was the source of Alfred E. Neuman and she was taking MAD to court to prove it.

Thus began the great Alfred E. Neuman lawsuit. The stakes were

not small. If MAD lost, it would be liable for millions of dollars in damages. And Alfred no longer would be permitted to show his worryless countenance in any MAD publication or property.

MAD's attorney Martin Scheiman hired tracers on both coasts to hunt for pictures of the idiot kid that had been published before 1914. A number of renderings popped up, several of them almost dead ringers for Harry Stuff's "Original Optimist." It became evident that portraits had been floating around the United States since before the turn of the century. But exact dates were hard to pin down.

Mrs. Stuff had sued before and had won several cases. Scheiman argued that Stuff, in copyrighted his "Original Optimist," had not created an original face, that he had based his version of the idiot kid on pictures in the public domain. In other words, Stuff's drawing was not properly copyrightable. Also, there was no copyright notice on most copies of Stuff's drawings, making it impossible for MAD to know it was copyrighted.

The trial of the case in United States District Court was full of legal infighting, most of which would bore readers of this book to tears. Nevertheless, Neumanphiles could rejoice at the deference shown their idol. Alfred, for



"The Original Optimist"

years the butt of a thousand jokes, was, for once, being treated with respect. For example, this exchange

United States District Court

FOR THE

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

DIVISION

CIVIL ACTION FILE NO. 67-1

PLAINTIFF

DEFENDANT

Defendant a
between Mrs. Stuff's attorney,
Samuel J. Stoll, and Gaines:

STOLL: Has ~~any~~ ^{been} MAD ~~ever~~ ^{been} issued
appeared since the adoption of this
character, Alfred E. Neuman, without
Mr. Neuman appearing on one of
its pages or cover pages.

GAINES: I don't believe an issue
ever did come out without featuring
him in some way, ~~sometimes more~~
~~refer to the complaint~~ ^{more} prominently than others ~~that he~~
~~would always be there~~

STOLL: ~~Would~~ ^{for the seller demanded} you consider Mr.
Neuman to be a rather prominent
and substantial part of your publication?

GAINES: I consider Mr. Neuman
to be our trademark at this point, an
identification with the magazine
and, as such, very helpful.

Thus testimony prompted Gaines
to wonder how an issue of MAD
would sell without Mr. Neuman's
picture on the cover. The experiment
was tried with issue #115 in
1968. The issue sold very well.

After listening to some six thousand
words of arguments and testimony and
after pouring over several hundred
pictures of Alfred and his
ancestors, Judge Lloyd F. MacMahon
arrived at his decision. MAD, he
declared, had not infringed on the
Stuff copyright, mainly because the
copyright notice was rarely included
on copies of Stuff's pictures. To put
it another way, it was as if the grin

SUMMONS

The summons for one
of the losing lawsuits
claiming prior ownership
of Alfred E. Neuman

ning boy was a bastard orphan and
that MAD had every legal right to
adopt him, give him loving care, and
provide him with a Christian name.

What—him worry? No longer.
The idiot kid was, at last, legitimate.

CHAPTER 14

upon you, within 20 days after service of this summons, to appear and answer the foregoing complaint. At the time of service, if you fail to appear, you will be found in default. SONG TO THE TUNE OF "SUE ME"

Cynthia Piltch was not amused. The source of her displeasure was an item in "Protest Magazine," a 1966 MAD piece spoofing the protest movement. Writer Larry Siegel had included this item:



Cynthia Piltch, who at the time was a freshman at Brookline, Mass., High School, felt the similarity in names was too close for coincidence, as did her parents, Maurice and Charlotte Piltch. Together they decided to sue MAD for \$250,000. It was a coincidence, of course, but a pesky one. MAD's attorney Jack Albert suggested that Gaines settle the case out of court. Gaines refused. To him it was cut and dried. MAD was a magazine of satire and was not obliged to check out every made-up name it used in its articles. Anyone could see that the reference made to Yetta Piltch had been made in jest, and Gaines felt that, if anything, it had raised Cynthia Piltch to a position of some fame in her school. Furthermore, another Piltch, namely Annabelle Piltch, of Flushing, New York, had read "Protest Magazine" and was delighted. Wrote Annabelle:

"The success of your satires, I feel, is due to your imaginative choice of fictitious names. The most hilarious name thus far...is Yetta Piltch. My husband and I enjoyed a hearty laugh over it and wonder how your staff could ever conceive such a funny name. I trust that all your readers have as fine a sense of humor as we do."

Clearly, the Brookline Piltches did not. Cynthia, ~~so~~ the official complaint charged, had been "injured in her reputation and health" and had "suffered damage to her feelings, mental anxiety and annoyance." Maurice and Charlotte charged that the MAD item made it appear as if "they had neglected the moral education of their daughter."



and had permitted her to carry on a course of immoral, obscene and illegal conduct."

Gaines pondered it all. It seemed that one Piltch's meat was another Piltch's poison. He looked over the family's testimony given in the pre-trial hearing and decided that perhaps MAD had hurt the Brookline branch. If this were so, MAD should make amends. Once again it was cut and dried, and he promptly settled for what may be described, in this book at least, as a modest sum.

MAD is probably the only publication that names its attorney on its masthead. If you look at a current issue you will see beneath the list of editors: "Jack Albert—lawsuits." This information is not given to solicit business for Albert. It is given as a service to offended readers so they know whom to contact when they sue. Despite this courtesy, MAD has been involved in only a dozen or so legal hassles, most of which have never reached the courtroom stage.

In the 1967 article, "The Ten Commandments Revisited," MAD's photo-humorist Max Brandel selected a picture of a motel to illustrate the Seventh Commandment, "Thou Shall Not Commit Adultery." The most vehement criticism of the piece came

not from some offended orthodox religionist, but from a lawyer in Salt Lake City, who charged that MAD, in publishing a photograph of his client's motel, had caused a "substantial number of tenants to vacate their rooms" — he didn't make clear

his motel was being singled out.

Albert heard nothing more from Salt Lake City.

A far greater clamor was heard in 1971 from North Miami, Florida, the home base of the American Federation of Police. The men in blue were outraged by the MAD Flag, a poster included in a MAD Special. The MAD Flag resembled the United States flag, except that the red stripes were replaced by words, namely a

parody of the Pledge of Allegiance.

"Those terms are words which cause riots," declared Gerald Arenberg, executive director of the police group. "Satire is one thing, but to make a representation of the American flag and subject the nation for which it stands to abuse is offensive to all Americans."

Arenberg sent copies of the poster to every Congressman in Washington. At least three of the Representatives agreed with Arenberg, their views sounding like a Cole Porter lyric.

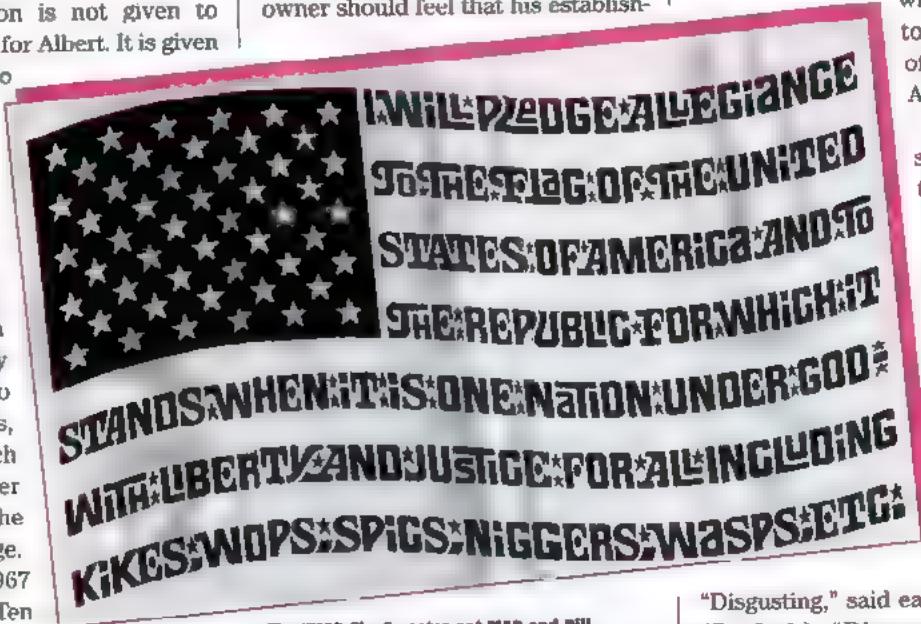
"Disgusting," said Earl F. Landgrebe (R, Ind.), "Disrespectful," said Lawrence Coughlin (R, Pa). "A defilement," said John E. Hunt (R, N.J.).

The police group took the issue to court to get the flag edition banned from newsstands. The summons to defend the suit was the first MAD heard of the affair. Gaines was put out. "They

**"Let's do a song book,"
said Nick Meglin.
"A song book? I don't know,"
said Feldstein.**

just why — resulting in damage to his client. The lawyer added that his client was suing MAD for libel and defamation of character for forty thousand dollars.

Albert wrote the lawyer, expressing MAD's regrets that the motel owner should feel that his establish-



The "MAD Flag" poster got MAD and Bill Gaines into hot water — again.

ment was being accused of begetting adultery. No such impression was intended. The offending photograph, Albert said, "was directed toward a class of motels where such occurrences do take place" and that the lawyer's client should not feel that

could have at least dropped me a line," he says. "I'm used to the people suing me observing the necessities."

The case was taken to court, then dropped when the police group realized that since the flag poster had been off sale for several weeks, nothing could be gained by having it banned. It was then that Arenberg finally wrote Gaines. "Each time I see this poster I am offended as an American, as a Police Officer and as a Jew," he stated.

MAD's response was an exclamation-pointed reply that was vintage Gaines.

Dear Mr. Arenberg:
At long last you have written to me directly, rather than simply throwing lawsuits! Had you had the courtesy to do this in the first place, perhaps all this nonsense would have been avoided!

Because, you see, you are barking up the wrong tree! You have goofed — you have pulled a boner! Why do I say this? Simply because you and I are on the same side of the fence, and you're not "with it" enough to know it!

I bow to no man in my regard for Flag and Country, and in my appreciation for the difficult, strenuous, and thankless job of our Police Forces. I am, unequivocally, a "law and order" man. As an old "Roosevelt Liberal," I have always deplored the use of terms such as "Kike," "Nigger," and the like, and their use in the flag poster was obviously not intended to show the magazine's or my acceptance thereof. On the contrary, the intent was to show that too many of us who claim to be offended by the use of labels, employ and accept more subtle forms of hate and bigotry. Our method is satire, and satire requires exaggeration.

MAD is directed to the younger reader, and I know that our younger readers understand that the flag poster, far from being anti-American, or anti any ethnic or religious group, was a plea for equality.

Please be advised that in the satiric terms of the flag poster, the ethnic make-up of the 11 salaried employees of MAD, including myself, is as follows:

2 "Kikes" (my father was Jewish!)

5 "Wops"

2 "Niggers"

1 "Wasps" (my mother was Protestant!)

Sorry, no "Spics" on salary, but Angelo Torres, one of our finest freelance artists, qualifies for that term.

Since you misunderstood the poster, you should be proud to have been offended as an American, as a Police Officer and as a Jew! But you did misunderstand the flag poster — because you are over 30, perhaps? And you ought to feel damn foolish!

Incidentally, Al Jaffee, the MAD writer who conceived the poster, is Jewish! His brother, Harry, who lettered it, is Jewish! Their mother was murdered by the Nazis in Lithuania in 1944.

No record exists of Arenberg's reaction to Gaines's letter.

In the summer of 1961, Al Feldstein was looking for a bonus piece to insert in an annual, *More Trash from MAD* #4.

"Let's do a song book," said Nick Meglin.

"A song book? I don't know," said Feldstein.

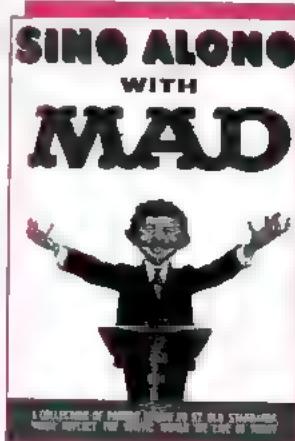
"I like the idea," said Jerry DeFuccio.

Feldstein talked it over with Gaines. "The guys want to do a song book," he said.

"We've done worse things. If you want to

do it, do it," said Gaines.

So was born "Sing Along With MAD," a project that would evolve into a landmark case in American law. Larry Siegel and I were assigned the task of taking several dozen popular songs and parodying their lyrics into comments on the current scene. There would be songs of show business, publishing, sports, doctors and medicine, and other fields. Siegel and I plunged in, completing forty-six parodies in less than two weeks, and Feldstein and his editorial crew added eleven more. The lyrics were completely distorted as were almost all of the song titles. For instance, this offering by Siegel from "Songs of Education":



ON THE SEAT WHERE I SIT
A tribute to the crowded conditions in our schools.
Song to the tune of: On The Street Where You Live

I have often sat in this seat before,
But I never shared it with Joe, Jim, and
Pete before,
Oh how sad am I, four kids occupy
This old desk and the seat where I sit.
I can hardly move, books are poking me,
There are now 12 arms and legs here that are
choking me.
And to seal my doom, I can't "leave the room."
Things are tough in this seat where I sit.



And oh that horrible feeling
When I know that lunch-time is near.
That very terrible feeling
That any second I may lose a nose or ear.
Taking spelling tests is no fun for me,
By the time I reach my pen, we are on history.
The best seat in school is the Dunce's Stool,
I'll go there from this seat where I sit.

(Continued on page 86)

THE MAD WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES PART V

(Continued from page 75)

Or this parody I wrote for "Songs of Space and the Atom:"

ALBERT EINSTEIN
A rousing ovation for a Pep Rally of Physicists.
Sung to the tune of: "Oklahoma!"

AAAAAAlbert Einstein
Found the law of relativity!
Yes, he paved the way,
And now today
We have got atomic energy!

AAAAAAlbert Einstein
Was the man behind it all, you see!
'Cause his law declared
That MC:
Could be counted on to equal E!

His theory is tough, that is true,
And it's just understood by a few!
But when we cry:
Ee-ow! A-yip-i-o-eil
There's no denyin'
You did just fine, Albert Einstein—
Albert Einstein, E-I-N-S-T-E-I-N
Albert Einstein!

There were others. "Easter Parade" became "Beauty parade," a spoof of beauty pageants. "Hello, Young Lovers" became "Hello, Young Doctors," a paean of how to make money in medicine. "Cheek to Cheek" became "Sheik to Sheik," a commentary on oil-rich desert potentates. "The Last Time I saw Paris" became "The First Time I Saw Maris," an account of the baseball slugger's success endorsing products.

The twenty-page songbook was published and was well received by MAD's readers. It was not well received, however, by the Music Publishers Protective Association, which felt that twelve of its member publishers had suffered copyright infringement. MAD, the association charged, had marketed versions of songs, without any authorization, which "caused substantial and irreparable damage" to the publishers.

The plaintiffs were not small-fry. Among them were

such corporations as Irving Berlin, Chappell, T.B. Harms and Leo Feist.

Twenty-five of their songs had been parodied — songs by such greats as Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, Oscar Hammerstein II, and, of course, Irving Berlin. The association sued Gaines and everyone connected with writing, illustrating, editing and distributing the song book for one dollar per song per each copy of More Trash From MAD #4 sold. More than one million copies had been sold, which meant that Gaines and his codefendants were being sued

to the tune of \$25 million.

MAD, in lawsuits at least, had hit the big time. During the three years it took to decide the case, Gaines went about his nor-

ing wrong. The case came to trial in the United States District Court in 1963. The publishers association complained that the MAD parodies had the same meter as the original songs and were "counterparts," because readers were informed that the parodies could be "sung to the tune of" the originals. MAD, it was further charged, "substantially copied" the original lyrics.

MAD's attorneys, Martin Scheiman and Jack Albert, countered that MAD was not a music magazine and that neither the original lyrics nor the music were printed in "Sing Along with MAD." The parodies were not copies; only the titles of the original songs were printed. There was no "sinister or insidious intent." If anything, the mention of the original titles glorified the popularity of the original songs.

Confidently, both sides submitted examples of the

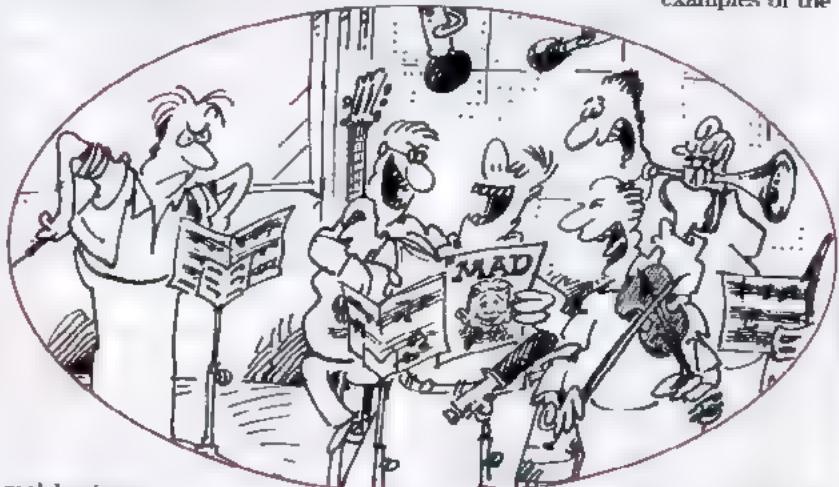


ILLUSTRATION BY SERGIO ARAGONÉS

mal business.

He knew that even though he no longer was the owner of MAD, losing the suit could create some thorny financial problems. He was also aware that losing the case would close off a fertile field of parody and satire. But in the main he was unconcerned, if for no other reason than he was convinced he had done noth-

two sets of lyrics — the originals and the parodies. Each side believed that a hard look at the differences, or similarities, would prove its argument. Judge Charles M. Metzner handed down his decision in June, 1963. *Variety* headlined it:

**PUBS LOSE PIRACY SUIT
VS. 'MAD' MAG**



MAD had won, at least temporarily. Judge Metzner ruled that the subject matter of the MAD lyrics was "completely different" from that of the originals. "For example," he stated, "to the tune of 'I've Got You Under My Skin,' defendants have written a lyric about fraternity hazing entitled 'I Swat You Hard on the Skin.' To the tune of 'A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody,' the defendants have written 'Louella Schwartz Describes Her Malady.'"

The judge viewed the battle with a fresh eye. He decided that the MAD lyrics were not parodies but satires "in original words and thought" of "several aspects of modern life." He said the new lyrics had "little in common" with those of the music publishers, then tossed a bouquet MAD's way by describing the new lyrics as "original" and "ingenuous."

However, Judge Metzner ruled against MAD on two of the twenty-

five songs. One was "Always," sung to the tune of "always," which I turned from a love ballad into an anthem for a psychiatrist. The judge felt that both lyrics allowed the word "always" to constitute the theme of the song. The other mixed number was "There's No Business Like No Business," sung to the tune of "there's No Business Like Show Business," which I wrote as a "ballad for small businessmen during recessions." Judge Metzner deemed the titles too similar, remarking that both lyrics revolved around the word "business."

The music publishers, apparently after all or nothing, did not give up. They appealed the case, and a year later it reached the United States Court of Appeals. There, three judges took another look. Shouted *Variety*:

'MAD' MAG'S PARODY WIN
NO LAUGHING MATTER
TO PUBLISHERS;
THEY'LL APPEAL



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF MARIE GAMES
The MAD gang dresses up for a salute to MAD Art Director John Putnam. From left to right: (top row) Nick Meglin, Frank Jacobs, Dave Berg, Arnaldo Franchioni, Bob Clarke, Lou Silverstone, Antonio Prohizas, (third row) Al Jaffee, David Frazier, Jack Albert, Al Feldstein, Dick DeBartolo, Jerry DeFuccio, Irving Schild, Sid Gartzman, (second row) Bill Gaines, Angelo Torzes, Sergio Aragones, Paul Peter Porges, George Woodbridge, (bottom row) Jack Rickard, Lenny Bronner, and, is that Lester and Willie Tyler?

The words of Tin Pan Alley's most venerable standards can now be freely parodied as a result of a decision handed down by the U.S. Court of Appeals, which upheld the right of MAD Magazine to satirize the lyrics of popular songs. Judge Irving R. Kaufman, writing the opinion for the three man court, said the satirical take-offs deserve "substantial freedom both as entertainment and as a form of social and literary criticism."

Judge Kaufman wrote at length about a celebrated case in 1955, when Jack Benny was taken to court by Loew's Inc., which runs MGM, after the comedian performed a TV satire of the movie "Gaslight." Benny lost the case because the court found that he took more material from the film than was needed to create an effective satire. In MAD's case, Judge Kaufman found no such taking. The magazine used only the meter of the

original lyrics and thrust them into a "totally incongruous setting." "We doubt," he said, "that even so eminent a composer as Irving Berlin should be permitted to claim a property interest in iambic pentameter."

Judge Kaufman was not bowled over by the quality of the MAD lyrics, commenting that "our individual tastes may prefer a more subtle brand of humor." But subtle or not, MAD had won again.

The music publishers fought on, taking the case to the United States Supreme Court, which also upheld the early decision. It was a landmark case, and Scheiman and Albert had good reason to feel proud. The right to publish parody lyrics or satir-





ical lyrics or whatever one wished to call them had become the law of the land.

William M. Gaines rarely sues anyone. He is, essentially, a defensive person who wants to be protected from people who sue him. He will, however, attack when he feels that the life of his magazine is being threatened. At such times, Gaines defends MAD much like a determined mother shielding her precocious son from the town bully.

In April, 1961, a woman reader in Oklahoma City wrote Gaines that she was having difficulty finding MAD in local outlets. The woman maintained there was a campaign afoot to keep the magazine off the stands because it was considered Communistic. She said that the problem stemmed from comments by an Oklahoma City attorney, Clyde J. Watts, which linked MAD and the Red menace. The allegations by Watts, a retired Army brigadier general, were apparently taken at face value by several drugstores and supermarkets, who refused to sell the magazine. Compounding the problem, an Oklahoma City women's group, Mothers United for Decency, had created a Smutmobile, a

28-foot-long trailer containing an assortment of books and magazines rated by the mothers as lewd, obscene and otherwise unfit for youthful consumption. Among the periodicals in the Smutmobile, which carried the crusade to all sections of the city, was MAD.

The woman reader, who described herself as an arch-conservative republican, was angry. To her, MAD didn't look the least pro-Communist, and she was concerned that the magazine might soon be banned throughout the entire city. It was time, she declared, for MAD to make a stand for freedom of the press.

Gaines made inquiries and found that the distributors in Oklahoma

cited MAD as an example of magazines that "ridicule all of America's traditional heroes and will tear down the loyalties and moral fiber of American youth." In an earlier speech at the University of Oklahoma, Watts objected to MAD, reported the school's newspaper, the Oklahoma Daily, as "the most insidious Communist propaganda in the United States today."

Gaines became aroused. His child was under attack. Sales of MAD had dropped sharply throughout Oklahoma, and he feared the crusade might spread to other states. He called Martin Scheiman. They weighed what to do. In the end they decided to sue Watts on a libel-slander charge for \$1.5 million.

Because the case would be tried in Oklahoma City, there was the need to obtain the services of a law firm there to work with Scheiman. Firm after firm was contacted, but not one would touch the case. Finally, Scheiman found one that would. "It was a kind of maverick law firm," says Gaines, "its partnership consisting of a Protestant, a Catholic, and a Jew."

Gaines, Feldstein, and Scheiman first confronted the other side at a pre-trial hearing. Both Gaines and Feldstein were examined by the

Gaines defends MAD much like a determined mother shielding her precocious son from the town bully.

City were indeed feeling the effects of the crusade. Stacks of MADs were being returned unopened by retailers. Gaines learned that Watts had testified before an Oklahoma State Senate committee investigating obscene literature. Watts, reported The Daily Oklahoman,

defense, with Gaines getting most of the scrutiny. It was an uncomfortable time for Gaines. Although he was the plaintiff, he began to feel like the defendant. "They kept asking me questions about Communist ideology," he recalls. "I'm no Communist and I'm no egghead and I



didn't know what the hell the questions meant." For example, this exchange between one of the defense attorneys, John Cantrell, and Gaines:

CANTRELL: Now, Mr. Gaines, are you, yourself, familiar with the Communist ideologies and objectives, and I mean by that the Communist Party and its forerunners?

GAINES: I am certainly not an expert on it. I have the knowledge of a layman, I guess.

CANTRELL: Do you know anything about the psychopolitical objectives of the Communist Party, particularly in America?

GAINES: What was the term?

CANTRELL: The psychopolitical objectives?

GAINES: Psychopolitical?

CANTRELL: Yes, sir.

GAINES: I am afraid I don't know what that is.

As he fended the questions, Gaines became aware of a gnawing sensation that he had felt only once before — when he defended his horror comics before the United States Senate subcommittee eight years earlier. The quizzing continued, being interrupted occasionally by comments from Scheiman and LeRoy A. Powers, a member of the Oklahoma City law firm working with Scheiman.

CANTRELL: All right, let me ask you this question. Did you know and do you subscribe to this statement as a statement of the objectives of the Communist Party, "To destroy loyalty to the State, all manner of forbiddings for youth must be put into effect so as to disenfranchise them as members of the Capitalist State and by policies of a better lot under Communism to gain their loyalty to the



How The Village People got started? A day on the town with (l-r) Lenay Brenner, Bill Gaines, Antonio Prohias, Angelo Torres and Nick Meglin.

Communist Movement." Do you subscribe to that and did you so understand that that was one of their objectives?

GAINES: Mr. Cantrell, I want to say that I don't understand that. Can you put it into clearer language?

POWERS: Would you give the title or whatever it is you are reading that from?

CANTRELL: Well, no. You may do so if you wish. (TO GAINES) Do you subscribe to this statement and did you know that this was one of the objectives of the Communist Party, "By these means the patriotism of youth for their capitalistic flag —"

GAINES: Excuse me, Mr. Cantrell, by what means?

CANTRELL: Let me finish and then I will try to clarify it for you.

GAINES: All right.

CANTRELL: "By these means the patriotism of youth for their capital

istic flag can be dulled to a point where they are no longer dangerous as soldiers. While this might require many decades to effect, capitalism's short-term view will never envision the length across which we can plan." And that refers to destroying the youth of the State. That's the method. Do you subscribe to that statement?

SCHEIMAN: By subscribe to that statement, what do you mean, Mr. Cantrell?

CANTRELL: Does he believe that is true that that was the objective?

SCHEIMAN: Objective of whom?

CANTRELL: Of the Communist Party.

SCHEIMAN: Aren't you asking an opinion of this witness?

CANTRELL: Yes, I'm asking him for his understanding of



what the objectives were and whether or not he believes that those were objectives.

SCHEIMAN: Well, hasn't the witness already indicated on the record that he has a limited knowledge of the Communist ideologies and objectives?

CANTRELL: Well, he can refuse to answer these questions, Mr. Scheiman, if he wishes, but I'm going to ask him. (TO **GAINES**) Now do you wish to answer that question?

GAINES: I would be happy to answer it if you will put it in such a way that I can understand it. You gave it to me piecemeal with the front part at the rear and something interjected between the middle and I don't know what you're talking about.

Later in the hearing, Gaines was questioned by Watts himself. In criticizing MAD, Watts had been especially offended by a "Cool School" version of the Gettysburg Address, in which writer Paul Laikei parodies Lincoln's words into jive talk ("Fourscore and like seven years ago our old daddies came on this scene with a new group, grooved in free kicks, and hip to the jazz that all cats make it the same").

WATTS: Do you consider Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as a sacred-type document in the traditions of our country?

GAINES: Well, I



GAINES: No, not at all.
WATTS: What then, from your concept as a publisher, is the sum total of the impact of that article on a youngster?

GAINES: To make them laugh.

WATTS: And to make them laugh at Lincoln's Gettysburg Address?

GAINES: No, to make them laugh at the hip language.

WATTS: And you have used Lincoln's Gettysburg Address associated with the so-called hip language for the sole purpose of making youngsters laugh, is that it?

GAINES: That is correct.

WATTS: And is that, as I understand, the objective of the publisher in presenting to the youngsters that type of feature?

GAINES: You are being pretty general, General. It is the purpose of MAD Magazine to evoke laughter from its readers. That's what they pay their quarter for.



Former MAD Art Director Lenny Bremer stands out in this photo from a 1970s *Photo on Television*.

I think it has anything to do with the feeling of reverence for Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

WATTS: Do you feel that it will downgrade the basic feeling of reverence that a youngster would have at all?

The preliminaries over, both sides prepared for the main event. Jerry DeFuccio put together a dossier of friendly letters MAD had received from readers. Penpals included a Methodist minister, an Anglican editor in Canada, the Catholic Review, the crew of the U.S.S. Bushnell (a submarine), members of Air Force Fighter Squadron 141 and the National Office for Decent Literature. DeFuccio also dug up a note from a juvenile court psychologist at



a rehabilitation center for delinquent boys and girls in Tulsa County, Oklahoma. The psychologist asked for a complimentary subscription to MAD for his youths gone astray, noting that "for reasons I can't quite express, I feel the magazine is good for them."

Scheiman and his colleagues tried to get the judge, Stephen S. Chandler, to disqualify himself on the grounds that he and Watts were close personal friends and that there was a risk of the judge showing personal bias in favor of Watts. The judge refused. This disturbed Scheiman. The judge told Scheiman that the case would receive "Oklahoma justice." This disturbed Scheiman even more.

The day of the trial, September 24, 1962, put MAD on the front page of the *Oklahoma City Times*:

CITY 'MAD' TRIAL PITS BITTER FOES

Amidst issues so packed with emotion that few can discuss them calmly, the stage was set Monday for a bitter showdown between opposing self-styled American patriots, each claiming the other is serving, willingly or unwillingly, the cause of Communism.

The contestants are, on one side, affiliates of MAD magazine, an increasingly popular periodical which through grotesque, malformed cartoon characters satirizes such time-honored American institutions as the White House and the home.

On the other side is Clyde Jefferson Watts, a vocal Oklahoma City attorney who zealously preaches the dangers of world Communism and warns Americans to develop an almost military-like composure in what he terms a "Strategy for survival."

"It is the purpose of MAD Magazine to evoke laughter from its readers."

The article was sprinkled with quotes from the key participants:

"They offered to dismiss it [the lawsuit] if I apologized," Watts said. "But I'm going to gamble even if they take every dime I have. If MAD continues and becomes the literary standard of our young people, there's nothing left to fight for, nothing to live for."

"The issue isn't whether we're Communists," retorts MAD attorney Martin Scheiman. "It's whether Clyde Watts's tactics are American."

"We're not interested in the money," said MAD editor Al Feldstein. "We're just trying to protect ourselves."

"We are a bunch of nutty non-conformists," says rotund William Gaines, publisher of MAD. "We're not interested in politics. We just want to entertain."

"I didn't go quite so far in the Army as Gen. Watts did," says Gaines, "But if they're going to call him General at the trial, I think I'll insist on them calling me Private First Class."

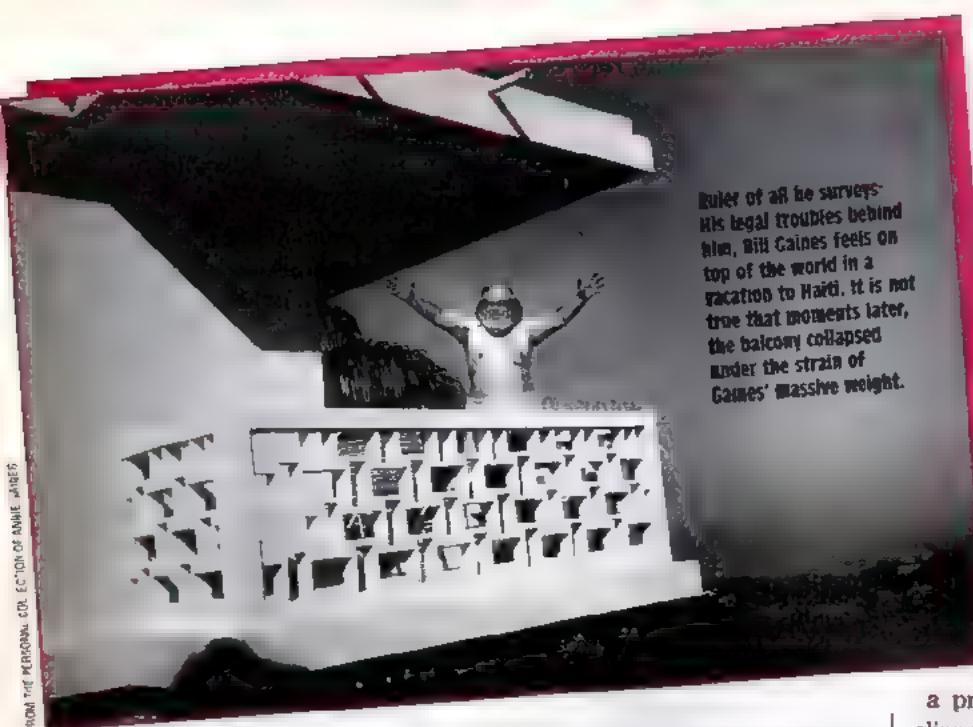
For all of Gaines's attempts at humor, he was not in a jovial frame of mind. Coming back to Oklahoma City for the trial was an unsettling, often terrifying experience. He saw it as a latter-day version of the sensational Monkey Trial in *Inherit The Wind*:

"remember the part where Spencer Tracy hits the little town in Tennessee? That's the kind of reception we got in Oklahoma. A barber threatened Marty Scheiman when he asked for a haircut. In the courtroom the people waiting to be chosen as jurors glared at us like we were some kind of undesirable aliens. I was damn glad when it was all over and we were able to get back to New York."

Everyone — the prosecution, the defense, the press, the local citizenry — expected a spectacular trial, a gavel-pounding wingding of cross-examinations, surprise witnesses



THE MAD "Straight Jacket" has become the rarest of MAD collectibles, with some selling for as much as \$4,000. (modeled here by Jerry DeFuccio and Leamy Brewster)



Ruler of all he surveys, his legal troubles behind him, Bill Gaines feels on top of the world in a vacation to Haiti. It is not true that moments later, the balcony collapsed under the strain of Gaines' massive weight.

and all of the other stock-in-trade ingredients of an emotional courtroom battle. At 9 A.M., before the trial was to start, both sides met in Judge Chandler's chamber. Attempts were made at a settlement, but neither side could make headway.

"We were at a stalemate," says Gaines. "I had a feeling that Watts was as nervous as I was. He wasn't a wealthy man and here was a tremendous lawsuit coming his way. I was nervous because I was in Oklahoma, his territory, and I was wondering if I was going to be able to get out of town without being lynched. I could see what was going to happen when we went out in the courtroom. It would be a circus. We'd probably lose, then we'd appeal, and we'd probably win."

Some inner voice kept whispering, "There has to be a better way." Prompted by this voice, or by his aversion to emotional scenes, or heaven knows what, Gaines walked to where Watts was sitting, leaned down and said:

"Let's not let the lawyers screw this

up. All I want from you is a statement that you do not believe MAD is Communist, that you never meant to imply that MAD is Communist, and that the whole thing is a misunderstanding. If you do that, I will be content."

Watts looked up. "Okay," he said.

The General drew up a paper agreeable to both sides. At 1:30 P.M., Watts, reading from his hand-written statement, announced in open court:

"At the time of trial, it appeared MAD Magazine and its staff were under the impression that I, Clyde J. Watts, had stated or inferred that MAD Magazine was a Communist publication and that the editors, staff and owners were Communist sympathizers, Communist dupes or promoting Communist causes."

"I publicly state I never referred to the magazine as a Communist-inspired and motivated publication or to its editors as Communists, Communist sympathizers or Communist dupes. If any person or persons so construed my remarks, they were mistaken."

The case was closed. All cash claims were dropped and each side paid its own legal expenses. Within a

few days, MAD could be found in all of the outlets in Oklahoma that had refused to sell it. It was also removed from the Smutmobile or, at least, placed under the counter.

There was a postscript. During the pre-trial examination, much was made by Watts's lawyers of Gaines's contributions to the American Civil Liberties Union. A few days after returning to New York, Gaines read a newspaper report that the ACLU had stood behind efforts by Watts to get his old friend, General Edwin A. Walker, released from a prison mental hospital. Gaines clipped out the report and sent it to Watts, noting that the ACLU protected everyone's civil liberties, including Walker's.

Watts replied. In a letter signed "Clyde," he thanked Gaines for the clipping and expressed the hope that their encounter in Oklahoma City had done both of them some good. Watts said that the affair had improved his sense of humor and that he hoped Gaines had become aware of Watts's concern for the future of the country.

There was no further correspondence.

COMING UP NEXT!

We look at Gaines' persona — his disdain of fashion and dislike of shaving, his adoration of zeppelins and King Kong, his disregard for speed limits and seatbelts, his incredible pannychiching and outlandish extravagances. We then travel around the world with Gaines and his MADmen as they invade Kenya, Italy, the Soviet Union and other unsuspecting locales.



To help launch the new MAD XL series,



FROM THE PERSONA COLLECTION OF ANNE GAINES

THE **MAD** WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES Part VI

BY FRANK JACOBS

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THE STORY SO FAR

We've had a glimpse of MAD's editorial side, noting the magazine's most notable articles and sitting in on a writer's conference with the editors. The origins and popularity (or notoriety) of Alfred E. Neuman have been chronicled, and we've gotten a blow-by-blow account of MAD's most memorable lawsuits.

CHAPTER 16

GAINES — AFTER A FASHION

Each time he hits his top weight, William M. Gaines has the credentials to call himself the World's Largest Publisher. Since, most of the time, he is either advancing toward or retreating from that figure, he must choose the day's wardrobe to fit the day's weight — that is, if you consider a sportshirt and slacks a wardrobe.

In his closet hang slacks for seven different weights, each pair numbered on a sliding scale from 1 (smallest) to 7 (largest). Jackie Gleason also owns clothes to fit him at various weights, but in his case there are dozens of outfits for each size. Gaines owns one pair of trousers for each size, except for Number 3, of which he possesses two pair. On the rare occasions he

replaces a pair, he is measured sitting down, that being the position he is most often in.

The effect of the clothes on the man is what fashion experts might regard as the Laundry Hamper Look Gaines, whom Larry Siegel calls "the ten worst-dressed men in the world," would be content to wear his sportshirt-and-slacks combination through eternity, but the dictates of society occasionally punish him. He explains:

"I own three ties, all narrow. I wear my multicolored tie to wine-tastings because it's required. I wear my bright red tie with my orange jacket and my green tie with my brown jacket to restaurants when ties are required. I own two bow ties, a black one I wear to formal occasions with either my small,

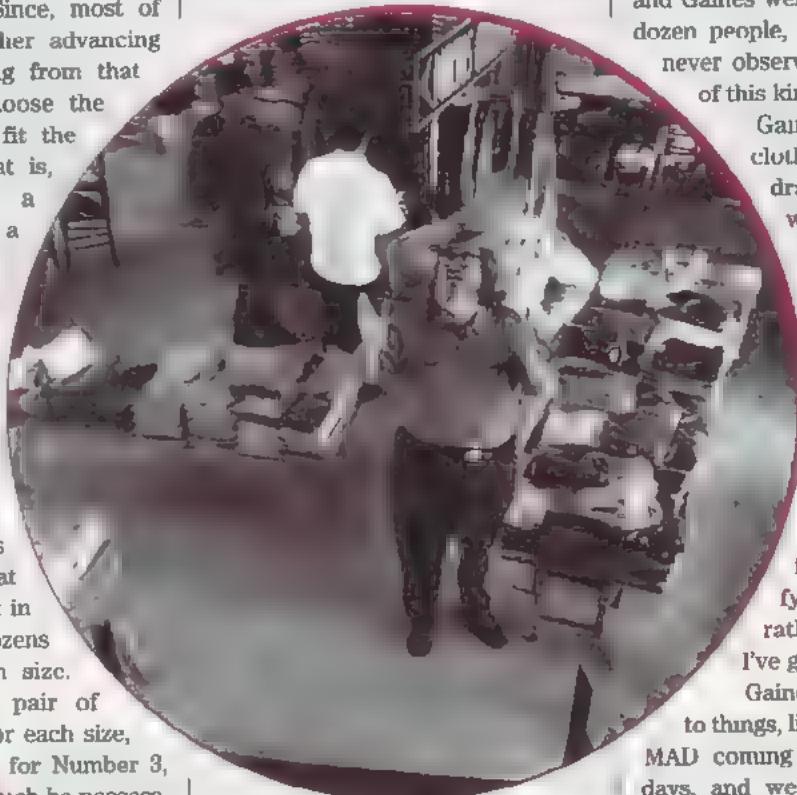
medium, or large black suit, and a red-and-green one that I wear to Christmas parties. I own six custom-made white shirts, none of which fits, and three noncustom-made white shirts, with neck sizes 18, 19, and 20."

Gaines buys his socks, size 12, all gray or blue cotton lisle, eight dozen at a time. At least he tries to. Most stores no longer carry them. Recently he found a discount store on Route 17 in New Jersey that had several dozen in stock. "How many pair do you want?" the salesgirl asked.

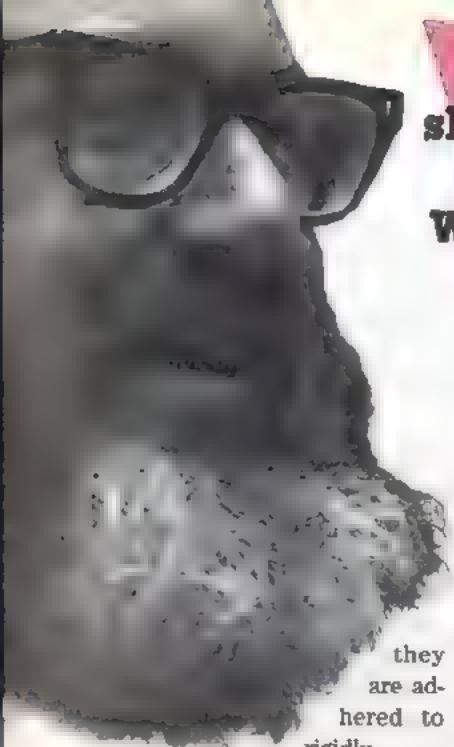
"All you have," said Gaines. There were seventy-seven. The salesgirl sighed and began ringing them up on the cash register, one by one. After a while, she developed a rhythm to her ringing, which attracted a small crowd of curious shoppers. By the end of her ringing, she and Gaines were circled by several dozen people, who seemingly had never observed a clearance sale of this kind.

Gaines hates buying clothes. "It's a terrible drag," he says. "You wait two hours for a salesman, who makes you go into a little cubbyhole where you have to take your clothes off, then put on the new ones and schlep out with the uncuffed pants dragging all over the floor. This is so horrifying that I'd much rather live with what I've got."

Gaines, you see, gets used to things, like the sun rising, and MAD coming out every forty-five days, and wearing wool trousers. The changes in his life come slowly, if at all. But when they do come,



something we thought we'd never see:
Bill Gaines browsing in a men's clothing store.



they
are ad-
hered to
rigidly.

He has always worn his hair in a crewcut and shaved several times a week. He hated going to the barber and he hated shaving, but it was not until 1968 that he did anything about it. What he did was to stop going to the barber and let his hair grow. Soon afterward, he traded away his last electric shaver to Meglin and let his beard grow.

This solved his tonsorial problem, but caused a sartorial one. The pride of his wardrobe is a T-shirt bearing a caricature of him done in 1965 by Sergio Aragones. Letting his hair grow was making the T-shirt obsolescent. Therefore, Gaines has regularly called in Aragones, who updates the shirt to conform with the appearance of its owner.

Gaines's beard is a shapeless expanse that reminds one of



Gaines's beard is a shapeless expanse that reminds one of Walt Whitman on a bad day.

Walt Whitman on a bad day. The sight of his bushy countenance staggers the uninitiated. During his trips to Haiti, native children behold this large, hirsute, white god, steal up and touch the beard of hair, then shriek and run away.

Even before Gaines's Hairy Period, his I-don't-care look evoked strong reactions. Dr. Mack Lipkin, his physician of fifteen years, was initially dismayed by what he saw as "a rather crude, fat buffoon, very often showing pleasure in affronting the establishment, such as his insistence on appearing everywhere without a tie."

"He was the stereotype of the slob. You'd never suspect observing this tailor's model of how not to dress that this was a man of sensitivity, a man who could rave about the nuances of fine wine. Then, as I got to know him, I got to appreciate how sharp and shrewd he really is."

The tip-off came after Gaines lost weight on a diet. "Suddenly," Lipkin says, "he looked like the man of intelligence that he is. When he's heavy, he's not the person anyone suspects lives in that body."

Gaines's appearance is further flavored by his horn-rims, which he is rarely without, principally because his left eye is 6/400 and the right one

8/400. Translated, this means that in order to be able to read the largest letter on an eye chart without visionary aids, he must be no further than six feet away using his left eye, no further than eight feet away using his right.

After he was fitted for his first pair of glasses at the age of eight, he was surprised to find there were leaves at the top of trees. Until then, he thought there was fuzz.

Gaines owns four television sets and watches none of them. He used to be an avid theater-goer, but now rarely attends. He's convinced they don't write plays like they used to—"they're all too damn relevant"—and what is probably more important, he doesn't think the seats are comfortable. He reads occasional books about wine and zeppelins and subscribes to *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *New York*. He reads *The New York Times* and *Daily News* while having his morning cup of coffee. He used to read the *Sunday Times*, but gave it up recently because of its size.

which intimidates him.



One year, the MAD staff presented Bill with an emergency clean white shirt and tie, encased in glass, fire-alarm style. Please note the glass is unbroken.



The times that Gaines shops are as infrequent as sightings of the ivory-billed woodpecker. A few years ago, having worn out both his summer sportcoats, which he wears the year around, and a Number 6 pair of slacks, he was forced to replace them. He summoned Nick Meglin, the only person at MAD whose taste rivals his own, to accompany him.

The scene, recalls Meglin, developed as follows:

(Gaines and Meglin enter store specializing in large sizes. Salesman approaches)

SALESMAN: Yes, sir. May I help you?

(Salesman disappears, returns with several sportcoats, shows Gaines double-breasted, blue-and-white houndstooth check)

Gaines: This is the latest cut. It's very popular this year.

(Gaines frowns, shakes his head)

How about this smart cream shantung with the double vent? They're wearing it a lot just now.

(Gaines makes face as if he has been served soft-boiled egg)

Gaines: Hmm. Well, we do have a few of last year's styles left. Of course, I don't suppose ..

Let me see them.

(Salesman brings out two single-breasted, solid-color sportcoats)

You may find these a wee bit outdated.

(Gaines tries on the first sportcoat)

Does orange go with pink?

(Gaines tries on a second sportcoat. It hangs like a tent)

What do you think?

Bill, can there be any question?

Before the Dodgers left Brooklyn, Gaines was a baseball fan, but now his enthusiasm for sports is limited to the roller derby.

"Why the roller derby?" I asked him.

"It's got violence," he said.

"What about football?"

"Mamby-pamby violence."

"What about hockey, soccer, boxing?"

"Mamby-pamby violence. But the roller derby — that's violence."

At one time, Gaines belonged to only two organizations, the American Legion and the American Civil Liberties Union. If this seems

Gaines: I'll take these. Now let me see a pair of black slacks.

(Salesman brings out slacks)

Is this my size?

Salesman: Yes.

Gaines: Then bring me a pair two sizes larger.

Salesman: Aren't you going to try them on?

No. If this is my size, I want one two sizes larger. C'mon, Nick, let's go.

(Gaines and Meglin leave store)

Thanks a lot, Nick. I couldn't have gotten through it without you.

Gaines is the only person I know who, when he gets up in the morning, puts on pajamas. He is allergic to wool and wears the pajamas underneath his slacks. I wondered why he hadn't tried trousers made of cotton or a synthetic fiber.

"How would I get them?" he asked. "Where do you buy your clothes?" I asked back.

"Mostly at Imperial Wear."

"Ask them."

"I never thought of that."

"Well, now you have."

"If they came to my house, I might do it."

"Did you ever ask them to?"

"No."

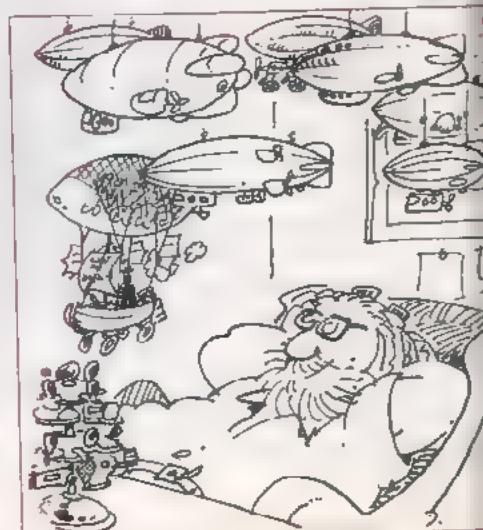
confined to his wine and food societies, the Museum of Modern Art ("So I can see free movies"), and the Lighter Than-Air Society, an organization for zeppelin buffs.

Gaines fell in love with zeppelins from the moment John Putnam introduced him to them, and today the bookshelves and walls of his apartment are filled and decorated with zeppelin books, posters, and memorabilia. He once paid an extra fee to the state of New York to get license plates for his Cadillac with the number DLZ127, which was the identification number of the famed Graf Zeppelin. Except for Putnam, no one paid any attention to the license plates until Gaines attended a Lighter-Than-Air convention at Lakehurst, New Jersey. There he met Vice Admiral Charles E. Rosendahl, who is to dirigibles what Babe Ruth is to baseball.

"I like your license plates. Most appropriate," Rosendahl noted when Gaines led him by his Cadillac. Gaines beamed. He had owned the plates for years, hoping someone would notice them. That it was Rosendahl more than made up for the wait.

I asked Gaines why he is a nut for zeppelins.

"Because they're a phallic symbol," he snapped. "Isn't that what you want me to say?"



"Come on," I persisted. "What's the reason?"

"Because they're big and you can't miss them."

That's probably closer to the truth. You'll note that Gaines's three great pursuits, not counting food and wine, are zeppelins, King Kong, and the Elephant Hotel, all of which, in their own way, are big and unmissable. Which figures, because so is he.

Al Jaffee believes zeppelins represent a world that Gaines yearns for but is beyond his grasp. "It's a pity they don't exist any more," Jaffee says. "I can just see Bill luxuriating in one of them as it makes its slow, tranquil passage around the world. It would be a dream come true."

Gaines owns a print of *King Kong*, which he shows at the slightest hint of interest. He also possesses those parts that were cut out before the movie was released — scenes in which the great ape strips the clothes of Fay Wray, crushes various victims underfoot, and, at one point, has a man for lunch. The scenes were removed for fear that King Kong might appear too unsympathetic.

The films Gaines owns tell something about the man. Among them: *Welcome Danger*. "I first saw it when I was seven, and it was the first movie I fell in love with. I identify with Harold Lloyd, constantly risking his life and always coming out on top. I've been very, very lucky in my life."

Inherit the Wind. "I'm a Clarence Darrow buff. I like the film because it goes along with my being a defensive person, which is what Darrow was."

Freaks. "Todd Browning used circus freaks as his supporting cast. It's one of the most unique horror films ever made."

The Last Angry Man. "Because I

like Paul Muni. I'll see anything from Muni, Spencer Tracy, or Edward G. Robinson."

I asked Gaines if he liked the new-wave pictures with their avant-garde plots and symbolism. "heavens, no," he said. "I rarely go out to a movie any more."

Gaines has not had good luck with cars, nor they with him. He has usually owned Cadillacs. In 1965, he asked his dealer to paint a white stripe down the side of one he wanted to buy, in order to make it look like that year's Oldsmobile, the racy look of which Gaines admired. The Cadillac dealer refused to deface his product, so Gaines bought a Lincoln from a dealer more amenable.

The next year he and Nancy drove to Mexico. This was the trip during which Gaines came down with *touristitis* and was convinced he was going to die. Feverish and wanting to get the hell out of Mexico, he barreled toward El Paso at a cruising speed of 110 miles per hour. One of the few vehicles he encountered on the road was a truck, coming from the opposite direction. The truck was just large enough to hide the object behind it, which was a horse ambling across the road. Gaines saw the horse and jammed on his brakes, reducing his speed to fifty. He could not avoid a collision, and the damage to both the horse and the car's hood was irreparable.

A Lincoln dealer in El Paso installed a second-hand hood, and the couple proceeded toward Las Vegas. The hood turned out to have a defective latch, and halfway to Las Vegas it sprang up and doubled back. Gaines stopped at a gas station and had the hood wired shut, at which point Nancy advised, "Sell the car."

"I'm not selling this car," Gaines thundered. "Anything that's wrong can be fixed."

From then on, the fates took over.

Hubcaps fell off, windows jammed, door handles came undone, but Gaines wouldn't sell the car. In Las Vegas, while buying a new hood, Gaines found that the two front tires were worn thin because of bad alignment. He bought two more and drove on to the West Coast. The car held up until the return trip eastward. In Denver, Gaines noticed that all four tires, including the two new ones, were worn thin. He went to a Lincoln dealer, who told him that the entire frame of the car was bent.

"Sell the car," the dealer advised. Gaines did at a great loss, and bought a new one. He later calculated that he had paid out seven hundred dollars in repairs during the trip. During the drive home, Gaines and Nancy detoured several hundred miles to see the Grand Canyon. Arriving there, Gaines got out of his car, took a look, said, "yep," then got in the car and drove on.

A few years later, he switched back to Cadillacs, which he drove without serious incident until 1970. Late that year, he and his son, Chris, motored to Pennsylvania. Gaines had just returned from the MAD trip to the Far East and was suffering from jet lag. He began to feel drowsy and pulled over to the side of the road to catch some sleep, but a highway patrolman told him he had to keep moving. He tried to get a cup of coffee, but could only find beer taverns. Figuring the best plan was to get to his destination quickly, he set the car's cruise control at eighty and sped onward.

The next thing he remembers was waking up with a jolt and seeing a Cadillac flying through the air. It wasn't his own. It was the one he had just collided with after falling asleep. Gaines's Cadillac careened off the turnpike and cut a swath through a patch of woods, then came



to a stop. Neither he nor Chris was hurt, nor were the three young men in the other car. Both Cadillacs, however, were totaled.

People who have driven with Gaines differ on the quality of his driving.

"He is an unheeding driver," says Arthur Dreeben.

"He is a maniac," says Sergio Aragones, who recalls a hair-raising dash through a Puerto Rican rainforest, in which Gaines stripped a Jeep's brakes in less than one hundred miles.

"He is a good driver, and thanks to him, so am I," says Nancy Gaines, who credits her ability on the road to the driving lessons he gave her.

"He is an expert, if somewhat daring, driver," says old friend William Woolfolk. "He once told me that he drove the way he did because of his father's constant haranguing. I've seen him miss cars by two inches to prove that his father was wrong about his ability as a motorist."

Gaines once told Paul Kast that there is a law of relativity to driving. If all cars are traveling at the same speed, one may assume that they are all standing still. Therefore, if one accelerates a bit, one is able to

maneuver around the other cars as if they were, indeed, standing still.

During his period as EC office boy, Kast was given the opportunity to put the theory to test. Gaines had suffered a sudden gallbladder attack and ordered Kast to drive him home to

his apartment in Brooklyn. Motivated by his employer screaming in pain next to him, Kast zoomed through traffic at speeds of up to one hundred miles per hour. On reaching the apartment, Gaines, in his agony, looked at Kast admiringly.

"Paul, that was a great driving performance."

Not too long ago, Gaines and I were zipping through Long Island. I decided to attach my seatbelt, but I couldn't locate the straps. I felt behind me and realized they were already connected. I disconnected them, which set off an electric buzzer, indicating a seatbelt was disconnected. I tried to lock the belt around me, but the straps wouldn't reach.

A statue honoring SW's cheapness, sculpted by MAD's late Art Director John Putnam.

PHOTO BY IRVING SCHILD



"Something's wrong with my seatbelt," I shouted over the buzzing.

Gaines said nothing.

"I'm trying to put it on, but the straps won't reach," I yelled.

"Of course they won't," Gaines said.

"Why not?"

"Because I've tied every one of them in a large knot."

"But why?"

"So that no one can use them."

"Why don't you want anyone to use them?"

"I'm against seatbelts. They're un-American, police state, and make people do what they don't want to do, and I'll be G**damned if anybody's going to wear them in my car."

As an executive of MAD's parent company, Warner Communications, Gaines is entitled to a Cadillac. Recently, however, he switched to a Ford Torino.

"When I had a Cadillac, taxis were driving rings around me," he explains. "Now I can outmaneuver the bastards."

One night I introduced him to a small restaurant near the MAD office. The portions were huge and the prices moderate. He thanked me for suggesting the place.



There are four areas in which Gaines is so cheap he gets sick about it

1. ELECTRICITY.

He will turn off a lamp in his bedroom even though he is going to the kitchen for a soft drink and will return within seconds. He would rather stub his toe and curse the darkness than keep a two-watt night light burning. One can point out that he keeps the air conditioner going in his wine closet twenty-four hours a day, but the closet houses thousands of dollars worth of wine, and, as I said, his attitudes on spending are extraordinary.

2. BEING OVERWEIGHT ON A PLANE.

He will spend one thousand dollars force-feeding himself in three-star French restaurants but can't stand the thought of parting with twenty dollars because his luggage is over the limit.

3. CUSTOMS.

Again, despite whatever generosity he may have shown overseas, he will strive like a Spartan to re-enter his homeland without having to pay duty. "It makes it difficult to bring back gifts of any merit," he has admitted.



"Then you liked the meal," I said.
"Not really, but who can beat the value?"

His attitudes on the spending of money are extraordinary.

"I'll blow ten thousand dollars taking my kids on trips without thinking twice, but when Wendy screams she wants her own phone, there's no way she's going to get it. I won't be tied down into paying fifteen dollars a month forever."

Because he regards himself as a defensive person, one might suspect Gaines is heavily insured. One would be correct. Gaines is protected

against almost every conceivable disaster short of planetary collision. He keeps his negotiable securities in a safe-deposit box at his bank, then pays seven hundred dollars a year to insure the safe-deposit box. I asked him if he had insurance to cover something happening to the company that insured his safe-deposit box. "I don't," he said, "but I worry about it."

When MAD first started, Gaines decided to insure the glass tops of the office desks. He called his insurance broker and told him he wanted coverage to begin immediately. Five minutes after he hung up, Harvey Kurtzman

accidentally dropped a paperweight on his desk, smashing the glass.

Gaines pays cash for almost everything he buys, but has a policy that covers the loss of credit cards and another that protects him from people forging his name on a check. His most valued policy is his \$10 million liability policy that covers "any thing I own against anything." The premiums are three thousand dollars a year, and if someone slips on a wine label in his apartment, or breaks one of his lightbulbs, Gaines is covered for \$10 million.

Gaines values himself least of all, carrying only \$25,000 of life insurance. "Compared with my

(Continued on page 54)

ILLUSTRATION BY SIGURD ARONSON

"When I had a Cadillac, taxis were driving rings around me," he explains. "now I can outmaneuver the bastards."



THE MAD WORLD OF WILLIAM M. GAINES PART VI

(Continued from page 19)

assets," he says, "my life is worth virtually nothing."

If Gaines ever devises a personal coat of arms, its motto should surely be the latin equivalent of "Love Me, Love My Neatness." Nancy Gaines, who lived with this obsession with order on and off for fifteen years, left the marriage, in her words, "a strong candidate for military school." It will come as no surprise to her, I am sure, that her ex-husband has not changed.

He still leaves his apartment each morning with exactly four quarters and ten dimes in his pocket and exactly thirty 1-dollar bills in

his money-clip.

He still refuses to have either his office or his apartment painted, for fear that some object might be moved, misplaced, or (shudder) broken.

He still buys all household necessities in quantities of three, six, twelve, or multiples of twelve. There are always twenty-four rolls of Scott Tissue in his storage closet; when one is used, Gaines buys another to replace it. The cans of soup remain in orderly rows and alphabetized, beginning with Asparagus, Cream of, and ending with Vegetable Beef.

He still refuses to loan out his

apartment when he is away ("How could I enjoy myself in Amsterdam when I know someone is putting one of my books back on the wrong shelf in New York? When I go away, my apartment is hermetically sealed").

For years Gaines employed a maid who cleaned his apartment three days a week. He was fond of the maid but felt uneasy until he could come home and check the entire apartment to see if anything had been moved. "The trouble with maids," he says, "is that they dust, and when things get dusted they get moved." When the maid quit, Gaines felt a great sense of relief and made no effort to replace her.

Gaines can't stand any talk about mysticism or the occult. Knowing this, I asked Michael Lutin a gifted professional astrologer, to cast Gaines's horoscope and tell me what he saw in the way of character and personality. I told Lutin nothing about Gaines, save that the person I was writing this book about was male and born in The Bronx late at night, March 1, 1922 (Gaines has never been sure of the exact time). I also provided the date of Gaines's father's death, so that Lutin could "rectify the chart," thereby determining the exact times Gaines was born. I won't go into any technical aspects, except to say that Gaines was born fifteen seconds after midnight, March 2, and is a Pisces with Scorpio rising and moon in Aries. Here is Lutin's astrological portrait of Gaines.

"Most of his self-development will take place in the second half of his life."

"He wants a sense of community with people, which always seems to be beyond his grasp. He will risk almost anything to gain affection and attention. He might even risk self-destruction."

"He probably has an antipathy toward discipline, but his work demands it, and this brings him up short, forcing him to mind what he's doing."

"He is probably a glutton. He has a fantastic love of life, wanting to stuff all of life inside him. He is jolly and tends to overeat."

"This person is constantly at war with two factors — reality vs. fantasy. Real life is always tugging at him, but so is fantasy. Each time he chooses one, the other butts in, pulling him the other way."

"He's a far-out kind of person I would even call him crazy. He possesses an ingenious, dexterous mind and is a free thinker. He escapes religion, but is pursued by it. I believe it's going to catch up with him as he gets older."

"Emotionally he's erratic. He's extremely interested in love and wants to be Number One in a love affair, but he's not lucky in love and he probably has better friends than lovers."

"He has a natural power, and people are attracted to him and they respect him. Especially, they respect him. They know he is keeping his eye on them to make sure they aren't pulling any fast ones. However his inner self is very gentle, refined, and easily shaken. That's the part he keeps hidden and doesn't want to make public."

"The whole issue of fatherhood is something that perplexes him, but he feels an obligation to it that he feels he has to work out."

"He's a man who loves to beat losing — a reckless daredevil, a speed demon. He loves danger and the unpredictable and probably has been a reckless driver. He may have had some accidents. He has a love of pleasure and risk, of moving on to the next adventure."

"He's a money maker. He's very lucky and has a way of getting rewards that are almost undeserved. He knows how to take limitations and carve his way around them. He's protected by his friends — it's virtually impossible for him to make total enemies — and he has the ability to draw his friends into his problems."

"He has a rich imagination, which makes him an escapist and a person who will indulge himself in fantasies. He fears entrapment and will take anything that offers a way out."

"There is a contradiction in his dealings with others. He is very just and humane, with a tremendous sense of fellow man, but at the same time he would pass anybody on a curve. Yet, there is a duality regarding people. He feels lonely and alienated, and yet he's very good with others, and there are scores of people who will rally around him in a crisis."

ABOUT THE WORLD

It was October, 1963, and several MAD staffers were sunning themselves on the sands of the Condado Beach Hotel in San Juan. Arnie Kogen emerged from a dip in the ocean and joined his colleagues.

"How's the water?" asked Nick Meglin.

"It needs salt," answered Kogen.

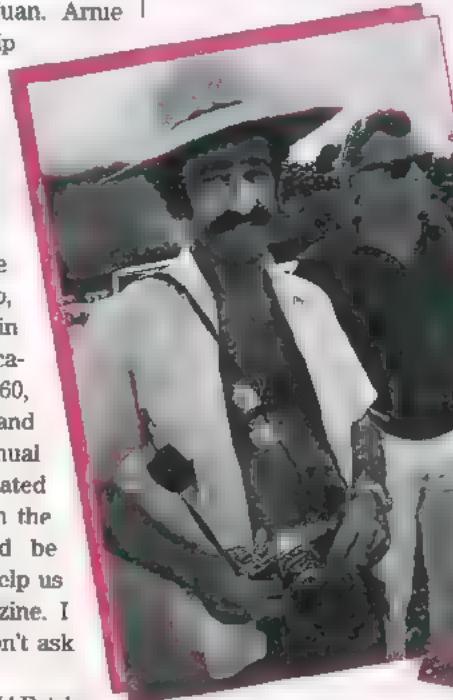
The occasion for the exchange was a MAD trip, and Kogen's remark was in the tradition of MAD vacation behavior. Since 1960, Gaines has taken staff and contributors on an annual autumn outing. "I originated the trips," he says, "with the idea that travel would be broadening and would help us put out a funnier magazine. I think it's worked, but don't ask me how."

Much of the time a MAD trip seems like an unrehearsed Marx Brothers movie on location. One of the chief perpetrators of the various lunacies has been Sergio Aragones. In Florence, the vacationers were grouped on the steps of the Duomo Cathedral when a shouting parade of striking local laborers stampeded by. In the middle of the strikers, carrying an appropriate picket sign and his clenched fist raised high, was Aragones.

In a restaurant in San Juan, Gaines spent several minutes reading off a complicated list of menu choices for twenty-one people before he realized that the waiter, scribbling silently, was Aragones. Gaines, no dupe he, figured out a way of getting even. The opportunity arose in Africa on Aragones's

birthday. After the group finished the main course at the Keekoruk Lodge in Kenya, the lights went out and a waiter came out of the kitchen, carrying a huge cake, candles aglow. As diners at other tables watched in anticipation, the cake was set proudly in front of

Convento restaurant, was approached on one trip by a brazen streetwalker. The girl offered her self. Kogen was not interested. The girl persisted, detailing her various charms and services. Kogen



Strangers in paradise (with emphasis on the STRANGE). On the 1974 MAD trip to Tahiti, Sergio Aragones hangs out with Don Martin (above) and a couple of coconut-melding locals (right).

Aragones, who then was ignored completely by his colleagues for the rest of the evening.

In Venice, Nick Meglin scrutinized his admission ticket to the Palace of the Doges. "What does it say?" he was asked. "It says," answered Meglin, "You may have already won this palace." At the Vatican, Dick DeBartolo looked around him at the opulence and remarked, "God isn't dead. He just can't afford the rent." "Where does this elevator go?" one staffer asked during a Vatican ascent. "To heaven," said DeBartolo.

Kogen, who once requested hot cereal at San Juan's fashionable El



shrugged them off. Frustrated, she asked, "What do you want?" "What do you charge for heavy kissing?" Kogen countered.

In Port of Spain, Trinidad, Kogen was dining at a fancy café with the entire MAD group. The waiter approached. "Good evening," he said, "I am your waiter, Pierre." "Good evening," responded Kogen, "I am Arnie, and this is George and Nick and Bill and Lennie and Dick and Jack and Frank and John and Al and Sid."

Gaines, who himself left an "Alfred E. Neuman for President" poster



Entering a Mexican bullfighting ring during a 1973 MAD trip are (L-R) Jack Davis, Irving Schild, Nick Meglin, Sergio Aragones, Bob Clarke and Paul Coker. THE DUST WOMAN.



atop the Leaning Tower of Pisa, is used to it all. "The quality of the remarks on our trips is, I suppose, above average."

The first trip, not surprisingly, took the group to Gaines's old stomping grounds, Haiti. It quickly became clear that a MAD holiday was of a different stripe than, say, a Fedders convention. Gaines set the tone the first day. Discovering that the magazine had one subscriber in Port-au-Prince, he piled his group in five jeeps, went to the lad's home, and presented him with a renewal card.

The high-point, literally, of the Haitian vacation was a visit to the sky-swept Citadel near Cap-Haitian. Each traveler mounted a burro and made the steep, slow climb up the mountain path, which was unspoiled by guardrails. Halfway to the top, at an especially tricky turn, MAD's then publicist, Larry Gore, looked down and duly noted, "My burro just crossed himself."

The following trip, to St. Thomas, was a complete disaster. It rained constantly. The hotel was changing ownership and in a state of inefficient flux. The menu was limited.

The cooking was joyless.

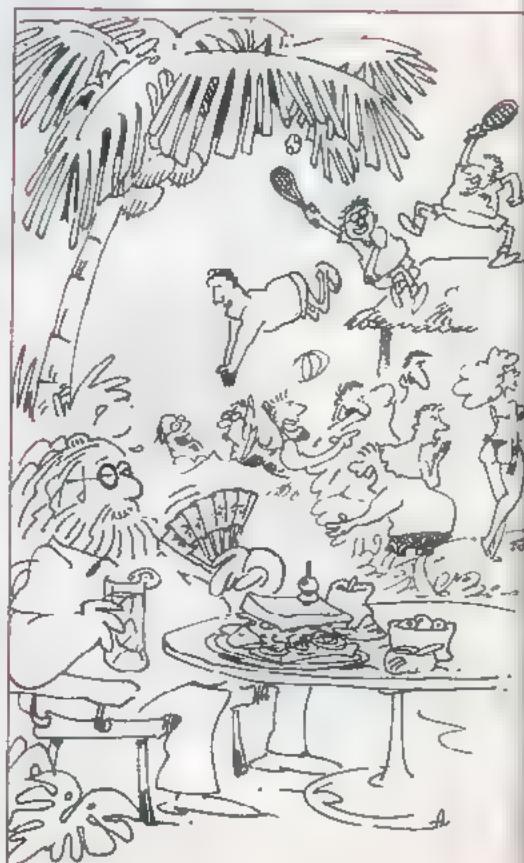
The service was nonexistent. The ocean was beckoning but the beach

was distant. The hotel swimming pool was vexingly warm and, for some reason never given, laden with salt. The week was so boring that, according to one staffer, the biggest kick he got was watching a jeep's odometer hit 30,000.

The early MAD trips were to the Caribbean and lasted about a week. But Gaines was not happy. With the exception of Haiti, the West Indies bored him. Especially Puerto Rico, where he spent most of his days reading and napping in his room or ordering a snack on a shaded terrace. True, there were the good restaurants in old San Juan, but these joys took up only a few hours or so each evening. Occasionally, in a neighborly gesture, he would tread cautiously across the beach to where the rest of us were sunning. Wearing his ever-present sportshirt and slacks, he would stand around for a while, exchange a few pleasantries, then shuffle back to the hotel, relieved to be away from the sun and surf and the picture of grown men actually enjoying the stuff, sometimes, even, exer-

cising in it.

There were better places to go with better things to see and better food to eat. It was time for the first giant step, and in the fall of 1966 Gaines loosened his belt and took the group to Paris. And to Surinam (1967), Italy (1968), Kenya, Tanzania, and Athens (1969), Japan,



Thailand, and Hongkong (1970), and London, Copenhagen, Leningrad, Moscow, and Amsterdam (1971). The trips became longer, lasting up to seventeen days. The editorial staff was automatically invited. The freelances had to have sold the magazine a set number of articles or pages the previous year in order to qualify.

There was, of course, madness to Gaines's motives. He hoped the appeal of visiting distant lands would raise the output of certain contributors, like old EC hand Jack Davis, for example. "I knew Davis loved to travel," Gaines says, "and since he's become eligible he's never missed one. I like having Davis in the magazine, and the trips are a way of keeping him there, despite the fact that I know he can make more money elsewhere."

Also, Gaines felt that the annual vacations, with their anticipations and memories, would knot the ties of the MAD family even tighter. Especially if the trips were stag.

"I never met two wives who could get along with each other," he says. "Bringing wives on the trips would tend to divide the convivial MAD group into cliques. The wives would spend so much on clothing trying to outdo each other that it would cost the boys a fortune, and I can't see any point in that."

Two of the magazine's mainstays, Al Feldstein and Mort Drucker, pass up the trips because of the husbands-only edict. The other MADmen, not necessarily accepting Gaines's anti-feminist philosophy, go readily, eager for a

fortnight away from the drawing board and typewriter. Skeptics might point out that Gaines, being divorced, is not burdened with the problem of leaving a wife at home; the trips, however, were stag while he was married.

And lest Gaines's hirelings be labeled male chauvinist pigs, I can state with some reliability that the trips are considered a vacation by at least some of the wives. Year after year, I have seen them at air terminals bidding us goodbye and welcoming us home. They are a happy lot, and to my mind there is little doubt that they are better off for the spouseless holiday Gaines

In recent years, because of the new counterculture informality and that special nonchalance that marks most world travelers, the dress could be described as late 20th-century optional: safari jackets, chinos, T-shirts with clashing sportcoats, Keds, anything. The exception is, of course, Gaines, whose attire has never deteriorated, that being an impossibility.

Despite the casualness in today's fashion, the sight of the MAD group often stuns the populace of less sophisticated lands. Many of the once fresh faces are now covered with hair. The abundance of beards prompted one observer to remark that the MAD gang looks like a road company of Benjamin Harrison's cabinet.

In Moscow, Gaines was continually stared at by the local popu-

lace. At first we thought it was because of his massive mop of hair and beard. We later learned from our guide that, to Muscovite eyes at



Jack Davis, Sergio Aragones, Irving Schild, Don Martin, John Putnam, Jerry DeFuccio, George Woodbridge and Al Jaffee (L-R) take a break during a 1970 MAD trip to Japan. Many Japanese citizens considered this MAD trip the ultimate revenge for Pearl Harbor.

In Moscow, Gaines was continually stared at by the local populace.

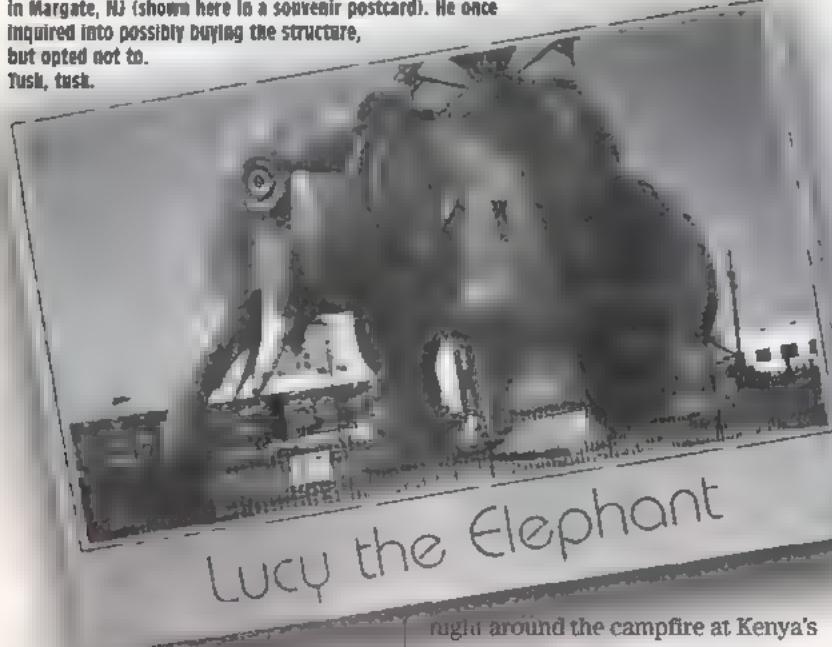
has given them.

When the trips began, most of the MADmen had traveled little outside the United States. We were fresh-faced green-horns then and our airplane attire bespoke the fact: suits, white shirts, ties and shined shoes.



Gill had a longtime interest in Lucy, the building shaped like an elephant in Margate, NJ (shown here in a souvenir postcard). He once inquired into possibly buying the structure, but opted not to.

Tusk, tusk.



least, he resembled Karl Marx.

Unlike other vacationing professionals, the men of MAD leave their work behind them. Shop talk is rare, although the junkets have inspired an occasional piece in the magazine. In the Vatican, DeBartolo listened as a guide explained that it took Michelangelo four years to paint his Sistine masterpiece. "And that was only the first coat," added DeBartolo. Later that day, several MADmen asked Gaines to extend the tour, already an hour behind schedule, so they could visit a building not on the official itinerary. "Well, okay," said Gaines, "but no looking!"

Both of the above quips were appropriated by Dave Berg, who then worked them into a five-page MAD piece, "The Lighter Side of American Tourists."

The conversation on the trips is seldom solemn, rarely thought provoking and never stifled.

I can't remember a serious conversation of any length I can remember a

night around the campfire at Kenya's Amboseli Game reserve, canopied by the oddly placed constellations of an equatorial sky, the drums of the bush villagers rumbling in from miles away, and ten of us breaking up at one-liners for two solid hours.

Gaines and DeBartolo barely knew each other until the Paris trip. One night over dinner, DeBartolo mentioned he had recently sailed his boat down the New Jersey shore

"Oh, yeah? Where'd you go?" Gaines asked

"A place called Margate. Margate City."

Gaines's eyebrows lifted.
"Why there?"

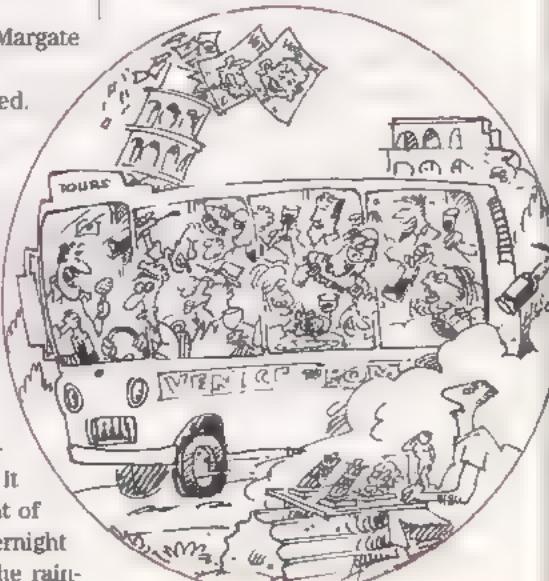
"I wanted to see the Elephant Hotel. You see, it was built by this guy named Lafferty, who..."

"I KNOW! I KNOW!" Gaines exclaimed, all the time asking himself why he hadn't gotten to know this DeBartolo fellow earlier.

Despite his hatred of exercise, Gaines enjoys roughing it well, sort of. The highlight of the Surinam trip was an overnight expedition to the heart of the rain-

forest. Gaines and five other volunteers boarded two motored dugouts and churned thirty miles up the Marowijne River to one of the government cabins in the interior. The cabin turned out to be equipped with running water, electricity, and comfortable bunks, most of which was lost on Gaines, who, having eaten thirty bananas en route, had come down with one of his periodic digestive ailments. For thirty-six hours, he screamed and moaned and gave the appearance, recalls Al Jaffee, of "a beached whale." Despite his ravings, Gaines remembers eating a delicious jungle pie called pom, made of taro root and a dried meat, the source of which he has never cared to learn.

Gaines chooses varied forms of transportation for his junkets. In Italy, he chartered a bus, loaded it with wine — "seventy cents a quart and delicious" cheese, sausage, salami, and other local produce and barreled down the boot from Venice to Rome. In Africa, the MADmen piled in Volkswagen station wagons, four travelers apiece, and criss-crossed the game reserves of Kenya and Tanzania on a photo safari.



By now the men of MAD are experienced travelers, their passports bearing stamps from five continents. Even so, this does not prevent an occasional embarrassment. In Bangkok, one of the group fell victim to the old Motor Launch Ploy. Sightseeing alone, he was approached by two well-dressed Thais, who invited him to see a Buddhist shrine, which was open "only one day a year." When he agreed, his hospitable hosts, who spoke impeccable English, took him on a motor launch to a distant island and treated him to several shrines and ruins. On the way back, an argument developed between the hosts and the motor launch driver.

"Such a dreadful thing has happened," one of the hosts explained to the MAD traveler. "The driver wants more money or else he will turn the boat over. We have paid him all we have. It is several miles to shore. Perhaps you can contribute and he will not turn the boat over." The MAD traveler, who could not swim and was carrying an expensive camera, complied, his "contribution" cost him thirty dollars.

No such losses occurred visiting Russia. But entering Russia—that was a different story. The customs inspector began by confiscating all pornography brought in from our previous stop, Copenhagen. This was not too surprising as many countries take a dim view of tourists bringing in the stuff. Jerry DeFuccio, who was carrying no pornography, expected to get by the inspector with no problem. The inspector had DeFuccio open his suitcase.

"What are those?" the inspector asked.

"Fifteen copies of MAD



Bill makes friends with two tourists on MAD's first trip to Bermuda (1975). Bill's phenomenal sexual magnetism remains one of the great unanswered questions of the 20th century.

Magazine," DeFuccio answered.

The inspector leafed through a copy, then summoned another inspector. They scrutinized the magazine. They did not laugh. They confiscated the fifteen copies.

The official Russian tourist bureau, Intourist, provided a guide, an attractive woman in her thirties named Vera, who met us in Leningrad and remained with us through our last moments in

For thirty-six hours, he screamed and moaned and gave the appearance, recalls Al Jaffee, of "a beached whale."

Moscow. Intourist guides are a dedicated lot and Vera was no exception. She was our shepherdess; we were her flock. Her English was excellent, except that like every English-speaking Russian we met, she usual

ly avoided using the words the and a. For instance: "This morning we will get on bus and go for ride on subway." Or "Tonight those who wish may go to ballet at People's Theatre."

Vera seemed all business and I wondered if she possessed a sense of humor. The first morning in Leningrad, we boarded bus for tour of city. Vera sat up front facing us. At one point she announced, through her microphone, "We are now driving on Moscow Highway." I leaned forward and asked, "If there is a Moscow Highway in Leningrad, is there a Leningrad Highway in Moscow?"

The first smile crossed Vera's face. "Yes," she said.

Three days later we were in Moscow, again in bus, again with Vera. She was describing a monument to Nazi resistance during World War II, then departed from her memorized script and proclaimed, "Mr. Jacobs will be interested to know we are now approaching Leningrad Highway... in Moscow."

The next day, Vera and I were standing outside our hotel and looking at the Kremlin across the street. "Did you know," she said, "that each of red stars on towers is made of rubies?"

My eyes widened because the stars seemed at least twenty feet in diameter. I looked at Vera incredulously. "Entirely of rubies?" I asked.

"Well-l-l," she shrugged, maybe a little crystallite."

Gaines had been to Russia on a private

(Continued on page 86)



visit two years earlier and had spent three leisurely hours chatting with the editors of Krokodil, the Soviet humor magazine. He told them about MAD and its success and how he had occasionally been labeled a Communist.

"But, of course, I'm not a Communist," he explained.

"With your circulation, I wouldn't think you would be," one of the Krokodil editors said.

At one point, the conversation turned to the modes of living of MAD people versus Krokodil people. "I mentioned that I lived in a twelve-room apartment in Manhattan and that I paid a monthly rent of twelve hundred and seventy dollars," Gaines recalls. "Thus, I will admit, is an outrageous amount to pay for rent, especially since at the time, I was living there alone, hav-

MAD photographer Irving Schild staged this impromptu "Schild Family Reunion" photo during the 1970 MAD trip to Japan.

ing been separated from Nancy. The Krokodil editors found it hard to believe."

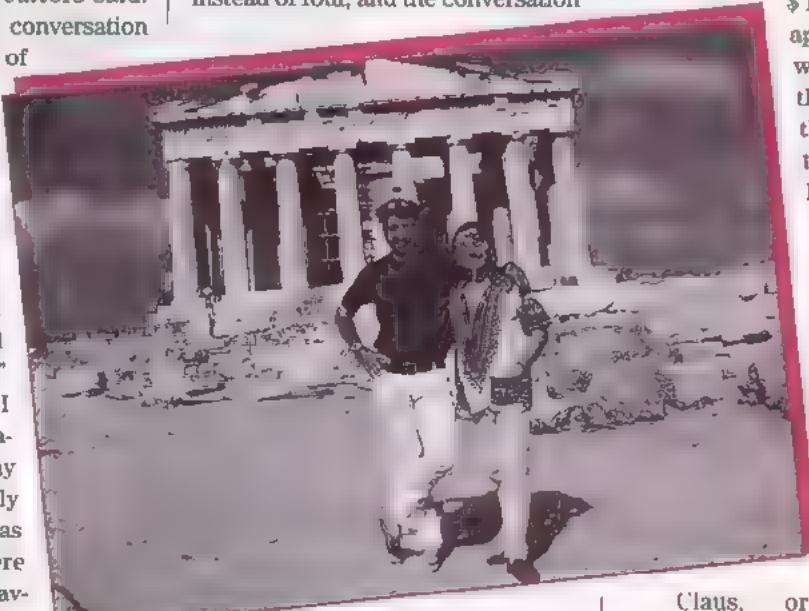
On the MAD trip, Gaines reappeared at Krokodil, this time with his entourage. The reception was more restrained. There were three Krokodil editors in attendance, instead of four, and the conversation

was polite and boring. Gaines believes that the Russians weren't prepared for the MAD group, didn't want to be prepared for the MAD group, or pretended not to be prepared for the MAD group. In any case, it was pretty much of a pointless visit, except for one moment of nostalgia. That was when the Krokodil editors recalled Gaines's previous visit and the chat about his

\$1,270-a-month apartment. That was the one item that had stuck in their minds, and they admitted they had talked about it for months.

Intourist kept close tabs on the MAD group, something that Gaines long ago gave up on. During the early trips, he was a combination field general and Santa

Claus, organizing group activities and handing out spending money. In San Juan, we noticed a non-MAD



This is Greek text: Sergio Aragones and Irving Schild in Greece during a 1969 MAD trip that started in Africa. (The reference to Greek text is a printer's term that had our art department in stitches.)

guest who bore a striking resemblance to MAD's Larry Siegal. On hearing this, DeBartolo remarked, "Gaines saw him this morning and automatically gave him eighty dollars in spending money." No longer. Gaines now pays only for plane fares and for hotels, usually on the American Plan, and makes little attempt to regulate the group's spare time. Today, checking into a hotel of a cosmopolitan city is the signal for the MADmen to throw their bags into their rooms and break loose.

George Woodbridge, army buff and war nut, speeds off to military outposts where he bargains for, say, a World War I lance corporal's stripes or a cartridge casing used in the Boer War. John Putnam scours shops for additions to his prized collection of sea shells. Photographer Irving Schild takes busmen's hol-

days and wanders off to take vast numbers of slides of street lamps and decaying wharves. Paul Coker disappears for hours at a time and almost literally loses himself in obscure art galleries and museums.

DeBartolo is a wildlife conservation zealot. During our last day in Nairobi, a Sunday, he roamed through the business district, placing leaflets protesting the slaughter of animals for their skins under the doors of shopkeepers. DeBartolo is a bachelor and probably more of a loner than any of his colleagues, but even he occasionally gets homesick for his companions in New York. In

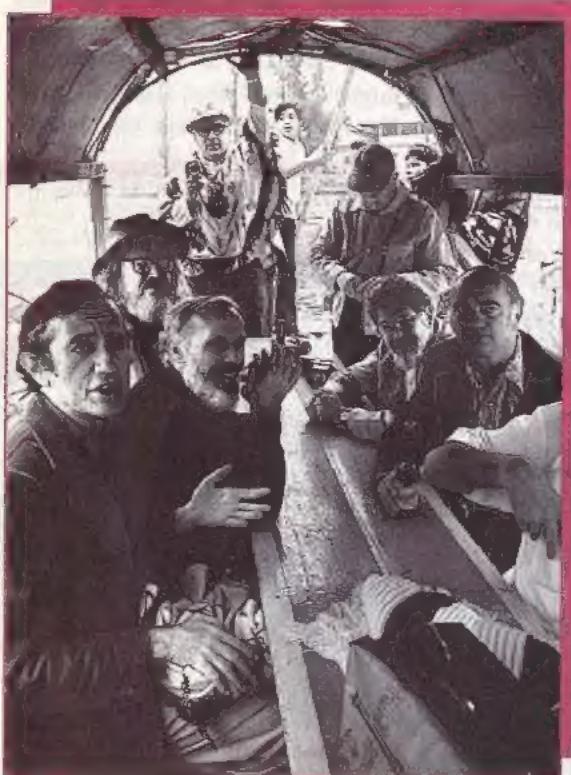
Rome, he shelled out twenty-seven dollars for a trans-Atlantic call in order to speak with his two dogs, Wags and Brandy, being cared for in his absence by a woman in his apartment house. It cheered him to learn that they recognized his voice. "They barked and ran around like crazy," he recalls fondly.

The most gregarious of the MADmen is Aragones, whose curiosity and spirit of adventure seldom flag. After the third day in Kenya, he had mastered enough Swahili to be able to converse, albeit in halting phrases, with our drivers in their

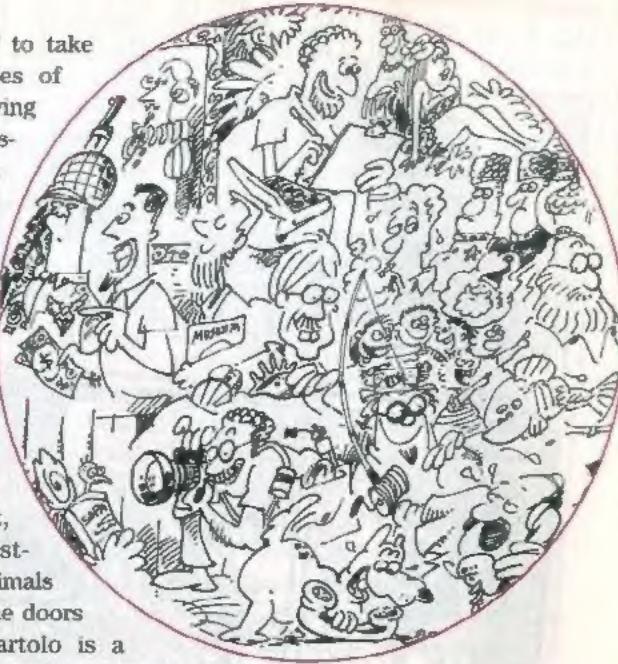
native tongue. In Italy, he took over the microphone from the guide on the bus and gave an impromptu, thoroughly inaccurate description of Ravenna.

Aragones appears to live in his own theatre of the absurd. He is especially fond of infiltrating tours of Japanese or East Indians who are having their group picture taken. As a result, the beaming face of Aragones is today a permanent, towering presence in the vacation scrapbooks of several hundred puzzled Asiatics.

The passion of Meglin is sketching, a pursuit which caused some uneasy moments in a bush village in the Surinam interior. Meglin had just finished a portrait of a rather imposing native chief. "Mine," said the chief, pointing to the drawing. "No mine," said Meglin. At which point the tour guide suggested that it might be a good idea for Meglin to relinquish the sketch. Noticing that the chief was giving him menacing glances, Meglin quickly handed over the sketch, then did



Ship of Fools? MADmen (clockwise from left) Frank Jacobs, Paul Coker, Bill Gaines, Dave Berg, Sid Gwirtzman, Al Jaffee, and Bob Clarke on a 1975 Mexican boat ride.



BILL...THANKS FOR
A GREAT TRIP....

ONE FINE DAY IN MADRID



another one for himself. Says he, "I did what any other red-blooded American would have done who was scared out of his wits."

Toward the end of each junket, the MAD group resembles a traveling souvenir stand. Thanks to the yearly excursions, most of our homes are now cluttered with mahogany masks from Haiti, Masai spears and carved elephants from Kenya, woodblocks and silks from Japan and Hong Kong, jade from Bangkok, and ermine and samovars from Russia.

Perhaps it is this willingness to explore, buy, and collect that distinguishes the MAD traveler. I recall walking into a small curio shop the first day in Haiti. The proprietor welcomed me with the words, "You must be from MAD." "That's right," I said, "but

on the mantelpiece, and a year later became a father.

In Tokyo, Gaines met two Japanese schoolchildren, and now corresponds with them, faithfully taking each letter to a waiter in a New York Japanese restaurant for translation. Jack Davis learned that humor is an unpredictable thing when he did some blackboard sketches for a class of fifth-graders in Surinam. The kids showed little response when he drew Donald Duck. They broke up when he caricatured their teacher.



Most of the MAD travelers rate the Africa and Surinam trips at the top of their list. This is probably because these were locales that most effectively took us away from the everyday. In 1969, after nine days in the bush of Kenya and Tanzania, we returned to Nairobi, where we found that during our absence Ilo Chi Minli, Drew Pearson, and Rocky Marciano had died and that the Mets were only one game out of first place. This feeling of isolation was equaled only in Russia, where I learned, by a chance meeting with a Moscow journalist, that Nikita Khrushchev had died two days earlier, while we were there. If not for that meeting, I doubt that we would have heard the news until we had reached our next stop, Amsterdam.

Looking back on the trips, it is difficult to select a high point. For some it might be the initial impact of the splendored spaciousness of St. Mark's Square in Venice. Others might choose the cruise up the Marowijne in Surinam. Or the first



Some samples from the MAD trip books presented to Bill by the Ususal Gang of Idiots as a token of their appreciation after each MAD trip. Some pages, like Don Martin's Spanish food gag (upper left) wound up being redrawn and printed in MAD.

glimpse of elephant that night at Treetops. Or the Kremlin at night, its lights casting long shadows on the somber streets of Moscow.

One of my favorite moments occurred on the Surinam trip. Six of us had crossed the Marowijne into the town of Saint Laurent in French Guiana. Ever since my boyhood I'd been fascinated with the place. French Guiana, remote, forbidding, with its Devil's Island and sweaty mystery, source of melodramas of escape, adventure, and desperate men engaged in dark struggles.

It was mid-afternoon, stifling hot without a trace of breeze, and the inhabitants of the town, unlike mad dogs and MAD travelers, were indoors. We trudged up the main street, passing white-limed shop and buildings a hundred years old in varying states of decay and ugliness. Wilted and thirsty, we entered a dimly-lit bistro. An aging four-bladed fan hung from the ceiling, circulating what little air there was. Seated around a circular table in a corner, drinking cognac and, I am sure, discussing matters of shadowy intrigue, were five vintage colonial types — policeman, baker, merchant, seafarer, bistro owner. They looked up at us and glowered. For a brief moment I was cut off from time and reality and fully expected Sydney Greenstreet to emerge, white-suited, from an unseen door and offer me the mask of Demetrios in return for a passage to Marseilles.

Gaines, who seems to have been born to travel, lives for the MAD trips. I suspect, however, that his favorite moments occur a few months after they are over. Each year the MADmen treat him to a dinner, usually at Little Charlie's, and present him with The Book. The Book is a leather bound volume containing commemorative contributions from all of the travelers. None

of the contributions is serious and most of them are at the expense of Gaines.

The books are Gaines's most prized possessions. "Each is a jewel in itself," he says, "A one-of-a-kind collection of incredible talent. Absolutely priceless."

As of this writing, Gaines is planning a trip to Spain and Morocco in 1972. And after that, whether MAD? Gaines answers:

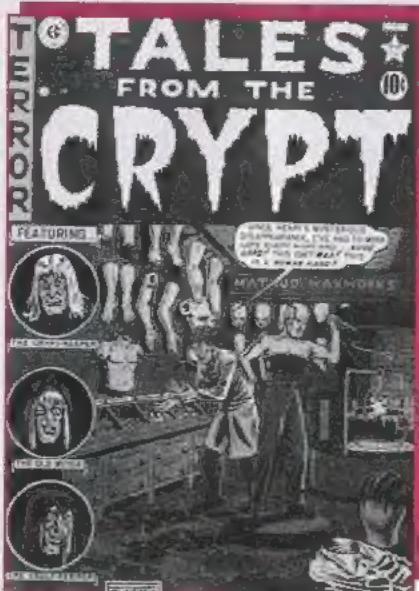
"I'm thinking about a trip to Tahiti and the South Seas, ending up in New Guinea. I hope one day we'll be able to go to red China. We haven't been to India yet or to Australia. Then there's Tristan da Cunha and places like that. Say, I wonder what the sauces are like in the Galapagos?"

CHAPTER 17

ONE LAST LOOK

Nineteen seventy-two was a vintage year for Gaines.

For starters, there was the premiere of *Tales From The Crypt*, a film dovetailing five of his horror tales and starring, among others, Sir Ralph Richardson, Joan Collins, and



Nigel Patrick. The reviews were mixed. Gaines thought the screenplay could have been a lot better, but was delighted with the acting and, especially, the photography, which illuminated the stories in appropriate bloody crimson and cadaverous grays.

Then came the EC Fan Addiction Convention, which drew house buffs from throughout the country. Gaines and his editors and artists of the horror days were lionized as folk heroes, hailed as the men who ushered in the New Age of Comics. One room at the conclave held a display of original art from the old magazines. A guard stood at the door, the drawings were encased in glass, and hundreds of conventioners passed through, viewing in hushed admiration the hallowed panels showing men being devoured by giant mice and wives chopping their husbands into small bits.

About the same time, the men of MAD were guests of honor at the National Cartoonists Society. Milton Caniff, the creator of *Terry and the Pirates* and *Steve Canyon*, extolled MAD and wondered how it maintained its quality year after year. Gaines answered, "The same way you keep doing it — talent."

Gaines has been rich for several years. Today, despite his startling beard, hair, and general appearance, he is discovering that he has also become respectable. Once pilloried as the enfant terrible of the comics, he is now one of the industry's elder statesmen. Recently, twenty-three of his horror and suspense stories were reprinted in a gorgeous, giant-size volume by Nostalgia Press. The book has proved a splendid seller at \$19.95, which is an indication of the stature the gory tales have achieved. Gaines is understandably proud to see his once-



damned comics now recognized as classics. But he feels the ultimate vindication has come with the letters that have poured in from his readers of twenty years ago.

One fan, Mike Coman, of Landover, Maryland, wrote:

I am an EC oldtimer [who] grew up when the horror comics were in full bloom. When I read the [Nostalgia Press] book and once again enjoyed the beautiful artwork and well-planned stories with the snap endings, memories of my childhood came flooding back to me. The comics were banned at my house at that time, which, of course, made reading them all the more exciting and even a little dangerous. What I'm trying to say is thank you for making my childhood a little more exciting. When [your] comics died, there was really nothing that ever came close to taking their place.

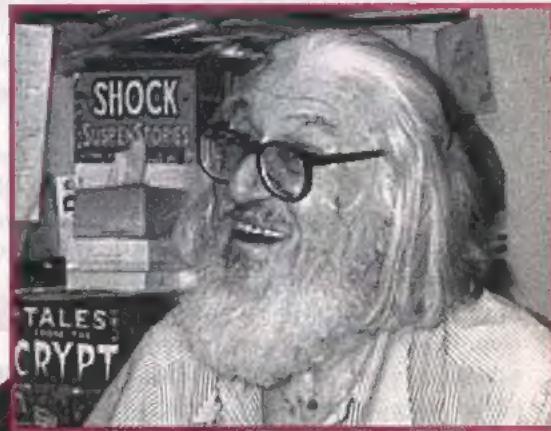
PHOTO BY JAMES SPITAL



Yes, two decades later, horror is everlasting, and Gaines stands redeemed. When National Periodical Publications, the company that wanted Gaines's scalp in the fifties, found recently that it required a business advisor, who did National call on? Why, Gaines, naturally, who now serves one day a week as an unpaid consul-

tant to the comic-book house, currently headed by his friend of many years, Carmine Infantino.

There are some who believe that if Gaines doesn't watch his step, he will find himself reigning high in the corporate structure. I doubt this. As long as MAD exists, Gaines will continue to nurture, to guide, and to protect it. As I said at the beginning, Gaines and MAD, like a boy and his frog, are inseparable.



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF ARNIE GAINES

This concludes our serialization of *The MAD World of William M. Gaines*, but watch for all-new bonus features starting in MAD XL #7! Like what? Like MAD Marginals XL, classic Sergio Aragones marginal cartoons presented in their original, nearsighted-friendly full-size form for the first time! Like Best of the Web, original bits from madmag.com presented in print for the first time! Also, expanded Idiot of the Issue Profiles, more movie outtakes and other Certifiable MADness! So check out MAD XL #7 on sale 12/19! Fa fa fa!

(Clockwise from lower left) When Gaines let loose, his bellowing laugh could be heard throughout the MAD offices, though it was sometimes mistaken for the plaintive wail of a dog run over by a steamroller. In the mid-1980s, Gaines rented a vintage railway dining car and transported the entire MAD staff on a surprise trip to Boston. Gaines in a familiar pose at his desk at 485 MADison Ave. Frank Jacobs, author of *The MAD World of William M. Gaines* with his favorite subject.

